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TODAY

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Friday, February 14, 2014

SLAMMED



Winter Offensive Takes Toll on East Coast

Snow plows work in tandem to clear Second Avenue in the Manhattan borough of New York, Feb. 13, 2014. A powerful storm system sweeping up the East Coast quickly intensified Thursday over New York, creating blizzard-like conditions that caused widespread transportation delays.

(Joshua Bright/The New York Times)

RON TODT

MARK SCOLFORO

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Yet another storm paralyzed the Northeast with heavy

snow and sleet Thursday, giving the winter-weary that oh-no-not-again feeling, while hundreds of thousands across the ice-

encrusted South waited in the cold for the electricity to come back on.

"Snow has become a four-letter word," lamented Tom

McGarrigle, a politician in suburban Philadelphia, where shoveling out has become a weekly - sometimes twice-weekly - chore

for residents and businesses all across the greater US East Coast.

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**VALENTINE'S DAY
HELPERS WORK AT
MIAMI AIRPORT**

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**WALL STREET RISES
WHILE INVESTORS
CHEER EARNINGS**

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Cupid's Valentine helpers live in Miami airport

SCOTT MAYEROWITZ

AP Airlines Writer

MIAMI (AP)—If Cupid were to have a home, it would be Miami International Airport.

Before millions of Americans can present their loved ones with a bouquet of Valentine's Day roses, most of the flowers are flown from Colombia and Ecuador to Miami, many in the bellies of passenger planes. There, cargo handlers and customs agents — call them Cupid's helpers — ensure that the deep red petals stay perfect until they reach their final destination.

In the weeks leading up to Valentine's Day, about 738 million flowers — 85 percent of imported flowers — come through the

Florida airport. Los Angeles is a distant second, with 44 million. The roses, carnations, hydrangeas, sunflowers and other varieties are rushed by forklift from planes to chilled warehouses and then onto refrigerated trucks or other planes and eventually delivered to florists, gas stations and grocery stores across the country.

"We always joke that a passenger gets themselves to the next flight while a bit of cargo does not," says Jim Butler, president of cargo operations at American Airlines.

The biggest problem this Valentine's Day might be the final few miles of the journey. A massive snowstorm that blanketed the east coast has made some



A load of flowers is rushed to a cooling unit at the Miami International Airport. In the weeks leading up to Valentine's Day, about 738 million flowers come through the airport.

(AP Photo/J Pat Carter)

suburban roads difficult for local delivery drivers.

For U.S. passenger airlines such as American, cargo

is a small, but increasingly important part of their business. New jets are built with more freight space and the airlines are adding new non-stop international routes popular with shippers.

Most airline passengers focus on what's visible to them, like the amount of legroom and the space in the overhead bins. Few think about what's beneath the cabin floor.

There's fresh Alaskan salmon, this season's latest luxury clothing from Milan and plenty of Peruvian asparagus heading to London. Then there are the more unusual items like human corneas, the occasional live cheetah or lion and large shipments of gold and diamonds.

And there are the flowers. Valentine's Day is a big day for flowers, topped only by Mother's Day, and cargo teams work extra hours ahead of both to ensure on-time deliveries.

"There's a spark in the air while loading these," says Andy Kirschner, director of cargo sales for Delta Air Lines.

"You know this is going to loved ones."

With flowers, as soon as they're cut a clock starts ticking. And nobody wants to give wilted roses on Valentine's Day.

Heat is the enemy. When a plane touches down in Miami, the flowers are rushed to a nearby warehouse where a parade of forklifts

carry them into giant coolers — really rooms — set at 35 degrees. Every time the giant cooler doors open up, fog rolls out as the frigid air hits the Florida humidity. Inside, big vacuums suck the hot air out of flower boxes and bring in the surrounding cold air. In one hour, the core temperature of flowers, vegetables or other perishables drops 46 degrees.

"It's like it cryogenically extends the life," says Nathaniel R. Miller, a supervisor with Perishable Handling Specialists, which operates American's Miami coolers. Before the flowers can be sent to stores across the country, U.S. Customs and Border Protection must sign off. Agents check tax documentation, ensure that drugs aren't being smuggled and inspect petals and stems for pests like moths, leaf-miner flies and spider mites, which can ruin crops in American fields.

The bugs — some as small as a period — can't be detected by X-ray machines. So a team of agents travels from warehouse to warehouse, looking at a sample of flowers. Bouquets are turned upside down, hit on the side.

Thump, thump, thump. Dirt, leaves and other debris fall onto tables covered in white paper. Magnifying loops are used to inspect the specks. Any bugs discovered are dropped into test tubes and sent off to a lab.□

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Kerry rejects request to delay joint military exercise

MICHAEL R. GORDON

CHOE SANG-HUN

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WASHINGTON/SEOUL - Secretary of State John Kerry rebuffed North Korea's demand that the United States and South Korea briefly delay a joint military exercise this month so that it does not coincide with the scheduled reunion of Korean families separated by the Korean War.

If held, the reunions would signal a significant thaw between the two Koreas, but the North has often used the prospect of better relations as political bait for concessions from the United States and the South. Kerry's comments came during the first stop of a several-nation trip to Asia meant in part to solidify efforts for dealing with North Korea and its increasingly sophisticated nuclear weapons programs. His arrival in South Korea came on the heels of a White

House announcement on Wednesday that President Barack Obama will visit South Korea, Japan, Malaysia and the Philippines in April, part of the administration's continuing efforts to direct more of its attention to Asia as China rises. The joint military drills with South Korea are supposed to begin on Feb. 24. North Korea argues that exercises raise tensions, while U.S. and South Korean officials view Pyongyang's latest demand as part of its longstanding effort to undermine the United States' military commitment to South Korea.

In a news conference with his South Korean counterpart, Kerry said that it was not "appropriate" to link humanitarian issues with North Korea's security demands.

"The family reunification is a matter of human rights," Kerry said. "There is no legitimate excuse for linking

the two."

Yun Byung-se, South Korea's foreign minister, also rejected the North Korean demand. "On that, South Korea and the United

States have no difference at all," he said.

There was no immediate response from North Korea, and it was unclear whether the family reunions, sched-

uled for Feb. 20-25, would still take place. North and South Korea were to begin a second round of high-level talks Friday to discuss the issue. □



U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, left, and South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se, right, speak during their meeting Thursday, Feb. 13, 2014, in Seoul, South Korea. Kerry is visiting South Korea, China, Indonesia, and the United Arab Emirates on a seven-day trip.

(AP Photo/Evan Vucci, Pool)

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Winter offensive takes toll on East Coast



Stafford County Parks and Recreation employee Matthew Cunningham uses a snow blower to clear the sidewalk in front of the Stafford County Courthouse on in Stafford, Va on Thursday, Feb. 13, 2014.

(AP Photo/The Free Lance-Star, Peter Cihelka)

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Continued from Front

The sloppy and treacherous mix of snow and face-stinging sleet grounded more than 6,500 flights Thursday and closed schools and businesses as it made its way up the heavily populated Interstate 95 corridor.

In its icy wake, utility crews in the South toiled to restore electricity to more than 700,000 homes and businesses, mostly in the Carolinas and Georgia. Temperatures in the hard-hit Atlanta area, with more than 200,000 outages, were expected to drop below freezing again overnight. At least 20 deaths, mostly in traffic accidents, were blamed on the storm. Among the dead was a pregnant woman who was struck by a mini-plow in New York City. Her baby was delivered in critical condition via cesarean section. The victims also included a man hit by a falling tree limb in North Carolina.

Baltimore awoke to 15 inches of snow. Washington, D.C., had at least 8, and federal offices and the city's two main airports were closed. The Virginia-West Virginia state line got more than a foot.

Philadelphia had nearly 9 inches, its fourth 6-inch snowstorm of the season — the first time that has happened in the city since record-keeping began in the late 1800s. New York City received nearly 10 inches, and parts of New Jersey had over 11.

The Boston area was expecting 4 to 6, while inland Connecticut and Massachusetts were looking at a foot or more.

In some places, the snow and freezing rain eased up during the day, but a second wave was expected overnight into Friday.

"It's like a dog chasing its tail all day," said Pat O'Pake, a plow operator in Pennsylvania.

In New Cumberland, Pa., which had about 10 inches of snow by midafternoon, Randal Delvernois had to

shovel after his snow blower conked out.

"Every time it snows, it's like, oh, not again," he said. "I didn't get this much snow when I lived in Colorado. It's warmer at the Olympics than it is here. That's ridiculous."

Across the South, the storm left in its wake a world of ice-encrusted trees and driveways and snapped branches and power lines. In Bonneau, S.C., Jimmy Ward and his wife, Cherie, lost power and spent Wednesday night in their home, warming themselves in front of a gas log fire. But after running low on propane, they headed Thursday night for a hotel, where it was expected to be cozier but a lot less exciting than the night before.

"From 2 o'clock yesterday until this morning, it just sounded like gunfire — all the trees popping and falling," Cherie Ward said.

In North Carolina, where the storm caused huge traffic jams in the Raleigh area on Wednesday as people left work and rushed to get home in the middle of the day, National Guardsmen in high-riding Humvees patrolled the snowy roads, looking for any stranded motorists.

Some roads around Raleigh remained clogged with abandoned vehicles Thursday morning. City crews were working to tow them to safe areas where their owners could recover them.

Around the country, this is shaping up as one of the snowiest winters on record. Washington, Detroit, Boston, Chicago, New York and St. Louis have already gotten roughly two or three times as much snow as they normally receive all season.

The procession of storms and cold blasts — blamed in part on a kink in the jet stream, the high-altitude air currents that dictate weather — has cut into retail sales across the U.S., the Commerce Department reported Thursday. Sales dipped 0.4 percent in January. □

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AT PRESS TIME:

Florida defendant awaits verdict in teen shooting

JACKSONVILLE, Florida (AP) — The defense attorney for a Florida man accused of fatally shooting of a teenager said Thursday that the case would never have received as much attention if not for the acquittal last summer of another man who shot and killed an unarmed black youth in the same state. Michael Dunn is awaiting the jury's verdict in his murder trial. He claims he shot 17-year-old Jordan Davis in self-defense outside a Jacksonville convenience store in 2012 after an argument over loud music. But prosecutors told jurors that Dunn, who is white, shot the teen because he felt disrespected by Davis, who is black. Davis had the music in his SUV turned back up after a friend complied with Dunn's request to turn the volume down. Dunn's trial was the latest Florida case to raise questions about self-defense and race.



Michael Dunn, gestures on the stand in his own defense during his trial in Jacksonville, Fla. Dunn is charged with fatally shooting 17-year-old Jordan Davis after an argument over loud music outside a Jacksonville, Fla. convenient store in 2012.

(The Florida Times-Union, Bob Mack, Pool)

It came six months after George Zimmerman was acquitted of any crime for

fatally shooting 17-year-old Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida, about 125

miles (200 kilometers) south of Jacksonville. The Dunn trial was prosecuted by the same State Attorney's Office as was the Zimmerman case. Zimmerman identifies as Hispanic and

Martin was black. Dunn is charged with first-degree murder, though jurors could also consider second-degree murder and manslaughter as options for a conviction. □

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Man gets life for killing, cementing body

MELISSA GABRIEL
Associated Press

PENSACOLA, Florida (AP) — A fantasy game enthusiast was sentenced to life in prison Thursday for beating a former Pensacola newspaper reporter to death with a hammer and burying his body in a concrete-covered pit in Georgia. William Cormier III was so desperate for money that he killed Sean Dugas in the fall of 2012 so he could steal his \$100,000 collection of fantasy role-playing cards for the game "Mag-

ic: The Gathering," prosecutors said.

Jurors convicted Cormier of first-degree murder after a little more than an hour of deliberations. Cormier III showed no reaction as the verdict was read.

Dugas' parents broke down in sobs as the verdict was read. His mother clutched a picture of her son.

Prosecutor Bridgette Jensen told jurors during closing arguments that Cormier III used profits from selling the cards to pay for the

plastic storage container that became Dugas' concrete-encased coffin.

"He sold Sean's own cards to buy that cheap, plastic coffin to put his body in," Jensen said.

Defense attorneys said prosecutors didn't prove that Cormier III killed Dugas, and instead suggested his twin was responsible. Cormier's twin brother pleaded no contest to charges of helping his brother move Dugas' body from Florida to Georgia. □

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US Financial Front:

American retail sales down 0.4% in January

JOSH BOAK

AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Cold weather across much of the United States contributed to a drop in retail sales in January. Americans spent less on autos and clothes and at restaurants — a decline that suggests that momentum from consumer spending at the end of 2013 has tailed off.

The Commerce Department said Thursday that retail sales fell a seasonally adjusted 0.4 percent last month. That marked the second straight decline after a 0.1 percent drop in December. Freezing cold and heavy snowfall raked much of the United States, cutting into store traffic and weighing on post-holiday sales. Major store chains have reduced their profit outlooks, including Wal-Mart Stores Inc., the largest retailer. "Horrible all round," said Ian Shepherdson, chief economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics.

The tepid showing contributed to a lower opening on Wall Street. The Dow Jones industrial average shed more than 80 points in early trading before paring its losses. Prospects for economic growth could remain lackluster for Febru-

ary, too, after snowstorms blanketed almost a third of the nation Thursday. The storm overlaps this week with a government survey that's being used to calculate the February jobs report. "It's quite possible that we have to brace our-

selves for another soft jobs report," said Jennifer Lee, senior economist at BMO Capital Markets. "That's due to the snow." Economic slowdowns caused by winter weather usually lead to stronger growth once temperatures rise again. □



Shoppers check out the sale at an ALDO store in the Mall at Robinson, in Robinson Township, Pa. The U.S. Commerce Department reported on spending at retail businesses and restaurants in January, on Thursday, Feb. 13, 2014.

(AP Photo/Gene J. Puskar)

Average 30-year U.S. mortgage rate at 4.28%

WASHINGTON (AP) — The average U.S. rate on a 30-year fixed mortgage edged up this week to 4.28 percent from 4.23 percent but remains near historically low levels after declining during the five previous weeks. Mortgage buyer Freddie Mac said Thursday that the average for the 15-year loan was unchanged at 3.33 percent.

Mortgage rates have risen about a full percentage point since hitting record lows roughly a year ago. The increase was driven by speculation that the Federal Reserve would reduce

its \$85 billion a month in bond purchases. Deeming the economy to be gaining strength, the Fed proceeded last month with planned reductions of its bond purchases, which have helped keep long-term interest rates low.

Recent economic data have pointed to a likely pause in the housing market's recovery. Real estate data provider CoreLogic reported last week that U.S. home prices slipped from November to December. And the year-over-year increase slowed, likely a result of weaker sales at

the end of last year. The number of Americans who have signed contracts to buy homes has plummeted to its lowest level in more than two years. Most economists expect home sales and prices to keep rising this year, but at a slower pace. They forecast that both will likely rise around 5 percent, down from double-digit gains in 2013. To calculate average mortgage rates, Freddie Mac surveys lenders across the country between Monday and Wednesday each week. The average doesn't include extra fees, known

as points, which most borrowers must pay to get the lowest rates. One point equals 1 percent of the loan amount. The average fee for a 30-year mortgage was unchanged at 0.7 point. The fee for a 15-year loan also remained at 0.7 point. The average rate on a one-year adjustable-rate mortgage rose to 2.55 percent from 2.51 percent. The average fee declined to 0.4 point from 0.5 point.

The average rate on a five-year adjustable mortgage fell to 3.05 percent from 3.08 percent. The fee held at 0.5 point. □

Applications for jobless benefits rise 8K to 339K

C. S. RUGABER

AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The number of Americans seeking U.S. unemployment benefits rose 8,000 last week to 339,000, evidence that layoffs ticked up. Still, the increase wasn't enough to suggest the job market is worsening.

The Labor Department said Thursday that the four week average of applications, a less volatile measure, increased 3,500 to a seasonally adjusted 336,750.

The average is roughly in line with pre-recession levels and suggests that, despite last week's rise, companies are cutting few jobs. Applications are a proxy for layoffs.

Last week's figure may also have been pushed up by cold weather, which can cause construction firms and other companies to stop work.

A total of 3.52 million Americans received benefits as of Jan. 25 — the latest data available — up from 3.47 million the previous week.

The data suggests the job market remains stable, despite weak hiring in the past two months. Tepid job gains in January and December have raised concerns that the economy has lost momentum this year.

Economists weren't worried about the rise in applications.

Jim O'Sullivan, an economist at High Frequency Economics, noted that the four-week average remains below last year's average of 343,000. Monthly job gains, meanwhile, averaged 194,000 last year. That suggests hiring could pick up as long as applications remain at their current level. □



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Feds: Man impersonated dad in Maxim magazine ownership bid

LARRY NEUMEISTER

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A convicted con man has been arrested on charges he impersonated his successful father in a failed bid to buy Maxim magazine.

Calvin Darden Jr., 39, was arrested Wednesday on wire fraud charges that carry a potential prison term of up to 40 years. Nearly a decade ago, he pleaded guilty in a scam that cost investors millions of dollars and was sentenced to four to 12 years in prison and ordered to repay nearly \$6 million.

This time, U.S. prosecutors said Darden fooled two lenders into providing more than \$8 million in financing for the potential acquisition of Maxim magazine and tried to defraud another victim of about \$20 million. They said he also caused a Taiwan-based company to pay him \$500,000 by falsely claiming that he needed a down payment for a New York Knicks exhibition game he was arranging to be played in Taiwan.

A message sent to Darden's lawyer for comment was not immediately returned Thursday.

Secret Service Agent Paul Deal said in court papers

leged scams, posing as his father in emails and on the telephone to convince investors that the Maxim purchase was viable and that the NBA game was going



A handout photo of Maxim Magazine. A convicted con man has been arrested on charges he impersonated his successful father in a failed bid to buy Maxim magazine.

(Handout Photo)

that the NBA commissioner, among others, had no recollection of meeting with Darden or his father, who lives in Atlanta and sits on the board of several publicly traded companies.

A prosecutor said Darden used false documents and "spoofed" emails in the al-

to happen. "Calvin Darden Jr. sought to mislead and deceive his victims at virtually every opportunity, and he used the full spectrum of fraudulent devices, including false documents, 'spoofed' emails and outright impersonation," U.S. □

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US: Bridgestone Corp. agrees to plead guilty

PETE YOST

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Bridgestone Corp. has agreed to plead guilty in a price-fixing conspiracy and pay a \$425 million criminal fine in a Justice Department probe that has swept the automotive parts industry. Twenty-six companies including Tokyo-based Bridgestone have pleaded guilty or agreed to plead guilty in the Justice Department's ongoing probe into price fixing and bid rigging. The companies have agreed to pay more than \$2 billion in criminal fines. Twenty-eight people have been charged.

According to a one-count felony charge in federal court in Toledo, Ohio, Bridgestone participated in allocating sales, rigging bids and raising prices of automotive anti-vibration rubber parts sold to car manufacturers in the U.S. and elsewhere.

Bridgestone sold the parts to Toyota Motor Corp., Nissan Motor Corp., Fuji Heavy Industries Ltd., Suzuki Motor Corp. and Isuzu Motors Ltd., and some of their subsidiaries, affiliates and suppliers.

The Justice Department says Bridgestone has agreed to cooperate with the government's auto parts investigations. The plea agreement is subject to court approval.

Bridgestone's role in the price-fixing on the rubber parts ran from 2001 to at least 2008, the government says.

In an earlier case, Bridgestone pleaded guilty in October 2011 and paid a \$28 million fine for price-fixing and for violating the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act in the marine hose industry.

On Thursday, the Justice Department said Bridgestone did not disclose at the time of the 2011 guilty plea that it had also participated in the anti-vibration rubber parts conspiracy. Bridgestone's failure to disclose the earlier conspiracy was a factor in determining the \$425 million fine, the department said.

The members of Bridgestone management "sincerely regret the actions that resulted in this plea agreement and that they did not discover these activities at an earlier date," the company said.

Bridgestone said it became aware of the Justice Department rubber parts investigation in May 2012 and that it became aware through that investigation that some employees had engaged in acts that violated U.S. antitrust laws from 2001 to 2008. The company said it is confident that the activities which led to the charges ceased in 2008, following full implementation of a global compliance initiative by the company. In order to re-establish the trust of its customers and the many communities in which it does business, the Bridgestone Group will redouble its efforts to ensure full compliance with all relevant laws and regulations through enhanced education, training and regular internal reviews and assessments, the company said. □

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Afghanistan releases prisoners over US objections

JAWAD SUKHANYAR

ROD NORDLAND

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BAGRAM, Afghanistan —

The Afghan government on Thursday released 65 prisoners over the objec-

Bagram prison in the morning, and were taken away in vehicles belonging to the Afghan National Army's military police, who are in charge of the facility. U.S. military guards were also

dul Samad, a prisoner who said that he was picked up in the insurgent-dominated district of Andar in Ghazni province 15 months ago, on his way to Nerkh district, another insurgent strong-

an insurgent, and that he had never been given a reason for his arrest.

"They did not find any evidence against me to prove my involvement in any wrongdoing," he said.

U.S. military officials have been publicly scathing in their criticism of the releas-

es, which have brought relations between the two allies to a low point.

In a statement, the U.S. military expressed "strong concern about the potential threats these detainees pose to coalition forces and Afghan security forces and civilians." □



Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers stand guard at the main gate of the Parwan Detention Facility Center on the outskirts of Bagram, some 50 kilometers (30 miles) north of Kabul, Afghanistan, Thursday, Feb. 13, 2014. Afghanistan released 65 accused militants from a former U.S. prison on Thursday despite protests from the American military, which says the men are Taliban fighters who will likely return to the battlefield to kill coalition and Afghan forces.

(AP Photo/Massoud Hossaini)

tions of the U.S. military, which said that the prisoners were dangerous insurgents responsible for killing its soldiers and that they might return to the fight.

The 65 detainees left the

present at the prison but were not in evidence. The police vehicles took the detainees to a small bazaar on a main road, where they were transferred to taxis. One of them was Ab-

hold in Wardak province, to meet his brother. Interviewed by cellphone while riding in a taxi taking him and four other released prisoners to Kabul, Samad said he was a farmer, not

5 arrested in Europe in black market sting

DAVID RISING

TOBY STERLING

Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Five men have been arrested in Germany and the Netherlands in a sting operation against a website allegedly used to sell illegal drugs and weapons, authorities said Thursday. A 21-year-old German man was arrested Tuesday in Bad Nauheim, near Frankfurt, on charges of computer fraud, membership in a criminal organization and drug violations on a European warrant issued by the Netherlands.

The same day, prosecutors in the Netherlands said a man from Utrecht, 29, and two men from the eastern city of Enschede, aged 30 and 31, also were arrested

on similar charges.

The four are accused of helping run the illegal online Internet portal Black Market Reloaded and its successor Utopia, whose servers are in Germany, Dutch authorities said. The site brings buyers and sellers together to sell black market goods, including drugs, guns and stolen credit cards, authorities said. Undercover police purchased drugs — including several thousand ecstasy pills — and weapons through the sites, Dutch prosecutors said.

In their searches of the suspects' homes, German and Dutch authorities seized computers, hard drives, USB sticks, as well as a virtual Bitcoin wallet with some

500,000 euros (\$680,000) worth of the electronic currency.

A fifth suspect, who was already in detention in the Netherlands after being arrested last year on charges of smuggling drugs to Germany, was re-arrested on new charges of involvement with the website and for attempting to organize an assassination from behind bars.

The 46-year-old Dutchman allegedly asked undercover officers to "bring someone to the other world," Dutch prosecutors said.

"The target was to have been subjected to extortion, then killed," they said in a statement.

None of the suspects' names were released. □

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Italy's prime minister resigns amid party revolt

JIM YARDLEY

© 2014 New York Times

ROME - Italian Prime Minister Enrico Letta, whose weak coalition government has come under increasing criticism, resigned Thursday night, after his own Democratic Party staged a dramatic insurrection and voted to replace him with the party's new leader, Matteo Renzi.

The Democratic Party is the largest member of Italy's coalition government, and the party's decision to dump Letta will likely have to be put to a confidence vote in Parliament.

Letta will meet with his Cabinet on Friday morning and then present his resignation letter to Italy's president, making way for Renzi, 38, to become Italy's youngest prime minister.

Renzi, the mayor of Florence who recently won a nationwide primary to become leader of the Demo-

catic Party, has a reputation for boldness and has long been considered Italy's most promising young politician. He has spoken repeatedly about the need for sweeping political

against his party's sitting prime minister.

"Italy is living in a moment of difficulty," Renzi said during a televised emergency meeting of the Democratic Party on Thursday after-



Italian Premier Enrico Letta attends a press conference at Chigi Palace government office in Rome, Wednesday, Feb. 12, 2014. Letta resigned Thursday night.

(AP Photo/Riccardo De Luca)

and economic changes. But few analysts foresaw that he would lead a revolt

noon. "We need to offer the possibility to emerge from this morass with a radi-

cal program to relaunch the country."

Italy is suffering through a prolonged recession, even as some other European countries are starting to emerge from a devastating downturn.

Unemployment tops 12 percent, and while business leaders have called for major reforms to spur economic growth, Italy's political system has been stalemated, largely unable to respond.

For Europe, which is witnessing rising populist anger in advance of European parliamentary elections, Italy's economic doldrums and political gyrations are sources of persistent concern.

Last year, Letta fended off challenges to bring down his government by arguing that Italy needed stability, an argument endorsed by many European leaders. □

Belgium okays euthanasia for kids under 18

JOHN DAHLBURG

BRUSSELS (AP) — Belgian lawmakers voted overwhelmingly on Thursday to extend the country's euthanasia law to children under 18.

The law empowers children with terminal ailments who are in great pain to ask to be put to death by their doctor if their parents agree and a psychiatrist or psychologist certifies they are conscious of what their choice signifies.

It has wide public support, but was opposed by some pediatricians and the country's Roman Catholic clergy. As House of Representative members cast their ballots and an electronic tally board lit up with enough green lights to indicate the measure would carry, a lone protester in the chamber shouted "assassins!" Hans Bonte, a Socialist, said no member of the House hopes the law will ever be made use of.

But he said all Belgians, including minors, deserved the right to "bid farewell to life in humane circumstances" without having to fear they were breaking the law. The 86-44 vote in the House, with 12 abstentions, followed approval by the Senate in December. Laurent Louis, an independent House member who opposed the legislation, said the majority of his colleagues were violating the natural order.

"A child is to be nurtured and protected, all the way to the end, whatever happens," Louis said. Another House member, Catherine Fonck, said the legislation was riddled with flaws and didn't address the possibility that one parent may favor euthanasia while the other is opposed.

All 13 proposed amendments seeking changes in the bill were defeated.

Daniel Bacquelaine, a physician and leader of the centrist Reform Movement, said it is wrong to think life and death questions should be reserved for adults. □

Crude bombs sent to UK recruitment offices

LONDON (AP) — The British government said Thursday that crude but viable

package bombs sent to seven British army recruitment offices appear to be

the work of Northern Ireland militants.

Prime Minister David Cameron's office said the suspicious packages contained "small, crude, but potentially viable devices bearing the hallmarks of Northern Ireland-related terrorism."

Cameron was briefed on the finds at a meeting of the government's crisis committee, known as COBRA.

His office said the devices "have now been safely dealt with by the police and bomb-disposal units."

Police said suspicious packages were found Thursday at army career offices in the towns of Oxford, Slough, Canterbury and Brighton, while similar packages were discovered earlier this week in Aldershot, Reading and Chatham.

Police said the packages' contents were being sent for forensic examination.

"Even if the contents are determined to be a viable device they pose a very low-level threat and are unlikely to cause significant harm or damage," said Detective Superintendent

Stan Gilmour of the Southeast Counterterrorism Unit. Police said all military facilities and post offices had been told to be "extra vigilant."

Irish Republican Army dissidents opposed to the peace process have mounted gun and bomb attacks in Northern Ireland in recent years, killing two soldiers, two policemen and one prison officer since 2009. In October they were blamed for sending letter bombs to high-profile political and security figures in Northern Ireland.

But they have not attacked mainland Britain since 2001, when car bombs outside the BBC headquarters, a London nightspot and other buildings wounded several people.

Britain's threat level from international terrorism stands at "substantial," the middle rung on a five-point scale. The threat from Northern Ireland terrorism is one rung lower, at "moderate."

The prime minister's office said the threat level "remains under constant review." □

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Putin encourages presidential ambitions of Egypt's ruler



Russian President Vladimir Putin, right, shakes hands with Egyptian Field Marshal Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi at the Novo-Ogaryovo state residence outside Moscow, Feb. 13, 2014. El-Sissi, a universally acknowledged but unannounced presidential candidate, received an early endorsement from Putin on Thursday, displaying strength abroad as he negotiates a reported \$2 billion arms deal with Russia.

(Mikhail Metzel/Pool via The New York Times)

DAVID D. KIRKPATRICK
© 2014 New York Times

CAIRO - Field Marshal Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi, a universally acknowledged but unannounced presidential candidate in Egypt, received an early endorse-

ment Thursday from President Vladimir Putin of Russia. El-Sissi was in Moscow on a visit widely seen as the latest in a series of carefully choreographed steps from general to president, and even before the two lead-

ers met, his wardrobe had already dominated the news here. Photographs of the field marshal striding forward in a civilian suit instead of his customary military uniform filled both the state and private media: a more presidential look. The trip also served to demonstrate his strength at home and abroad by delivering a message to Washington about Egypt's independence.

El-Sissi's stated purpose was to negotiate a deal to buy Russian weapons with money donated by the Persian Gulf sponsors of the new military-backed government - reportedly as

much as \$2 billion. Such a purchase would send a signal that the Egyptian military was not solely reliant on the United States, which normally gives Egypt about \$1.3 billion a year in military equipment and services but has suspended certain shipments in response to the military ouster last summer of its first freely elected president, Mohammed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Obama administration has said it would resume full shipments when Egypt takes steps toward democracy, and in the meantime Egypt is eager to show the United States that it has alternative allies.

if Washington proves too difficult. The Soviet Union was Egypt's major military patron during much of the Cold War, before President Anwar el-Sadat switched allegiances with the Camp David peace accords. But U.S. officials have said they are not worried about a new Russian-Egyptian alliance, in part because Egypt is deeply dependent on Washington for spare parts and upkeep of its existing equipment. But Putin, who has been looking to expand Russia's influence in the Middle East, was eager to welcome his visitor and encourage his ambitions. □

Russia presents a draft plan to UN on aid access to Syria

ANNE BARNARD
© 2014 New York Times

GENEVA - Russia has presented its own draft resolution on humanitarian aid access in Syria to the U.N. Security Council, adding calls to condemn "terrorism" in the conflict after rejecting a U.S.-backed version of the resolution, Reuters reported Thursday, quoting Foreign Minister Sergey V. Lavrov.

"Terrorism is certainly no less acute a problem" than the need for aid access to blockaded areas in Syria, Lavrov said, adding that Russia's draft laid out "our vision of the role the Security Council can play if we want to foster a solution to the problems and not antagonize one side or the other."

The wrangling over the

wording of the resolution reflects the central dispute hampering peace talks here.

The Syrian government's delegation insists on discussing only the fight against terrorism in Syria, while the Syrian opposition and the U.N. mediator, Lakhdar Brahimi, are pushing to discuss, perhaps in parallel, the formation of a transitional governing body for Syria.

The founding document of the peace talks, the June 2012 Geneva I communiqué, does not mention the word terrorism, but calls for all sides to end violence. Since it was drafted, suicide bombs and other attacks on civilians by extremist jihadist groups have become a much larger problem in the Syrian conflict. □

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Believe it, or not:

New Argentine inflation index issued

ALMUDENA CALATRAVA
Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina

(AP) — Believe it, or not? That's the question of the day in Argentina, where the credibility of a new consumer price index unveiled Thursday is key to containing inflation and attracting investment from a world that has lost confidence in the government's numbers.

The new index's first monthly report said consumer prices rose 3.7 percent in January compared to the month before. That's 44 percent on an annual basis, and roughly four times the rate Argentina reported nearly every month for the previous seven years.

Many Argentines also have lost faith, feeding inflation and capital flight by trading their pesos for dollars as fast as they can. Last month's sudden 20 percent currency devaluation also sent inflationary shocks through the entire supply chain, making it difficult for businesses and customers to know what a fair price is anymore.

"The worst thing the government did was intervene in the statistics institute. It's like breaking a thermometer; you never know if you have a fever. Now they're putting out a new index. It will have a cloud of doubts over its validity," university professor Elida Repetto, 53, said as she bought veg-

Institute of Statistics and Census.

Since then, actual prices rose somewhere between 70 and 140 percent higher than the government acknowledged, said Alberto Ramos, an economist with Goldman Sachs.

Private economists responded to the lack of information by making their own estimates, which were combined and reported by minority lawmakers in Congress. Their latest guess was 4.6 percent for January, one of the highest inflation rates in the world. Argentina has seen dangerous protests in recent months as its unions prepare for annual negotiations over pay hikes. Upris-



People walk by the entrance of the headquarters of the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC) in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Thursday, Feb. 13, 2014. For seven years, the government has systematically underestimated inflation and thus overestimated economic growth, critics say.

Since January 2007, the government systematically underestimated inflation and thus overestimated economic growth, critics said. Even close government allies abandoned the official data, demanding 2014 pay raises of more than 30 percent to keep up with inflation officially estimated at just 10 percent a year.

The new index was designed in consultation with the International Monetary Fund, which shamed the government last year by refusing to include its economic data in global reports.

estables.

By recognizing more of the true costs of living in Argentina, Thursday's first report was a good start toward stabilizing the economy, said Matias Carugati, chief economist at the Management & Fit consultancy in Buenos Aires.

"This is the government's silver bullet to begin to take a more rational path and combat this evil," Carugati said.

The old index almost always reported monthly inflation at less than 1 percent after political appointees changed the methodology of the National

ings by provincial police officers provoked deadly looting in December before governors, complaining of guns at their heads, agreed to budget-busting increases. Street demonstrations over inflation routinely complicate life in the capital.

With annual salary talks beginning for nearly 1,000 sectors of the economy, having reliable data "would really organize the discussion and tamp down inflationary expectations," said economist Dante Sica, who directs the abeceb.com consultancy in Buenos Aires. □

LATIN & CARIBBEAN BRIEFS

Venezuela: Lopez rumored arrested

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — A hard-line leader of Venezuela's opposition has dropped out of sight amid media reports that an arrest order has been issued for his alleged role inciting violence at anti-government protests that resulted in three deaths. Leopoldo Lopez was last heard from Wednesday night at a press conference where he vowed demonstrations against President Nicolas Maduro's government will continue. Chief federal prosecutor Luisa Ortega made no mention of an alleged arrest order in statements to the media Thursday. □

Colombia peace talks head to recess

HAVANA (AP) — Colombian government and guerrilla representatives are heading into a recess in peace talks in Havana. The discussions have been overshadowed in recent days by reports of spying by Colombian military intelligence on both delegations. The alleged snooping reportedly swept up electronic communications including email exchanges between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia and international journalists. The two sides intend to resume talks Feb. 24. Discussions currently center on the country's drug trade. □

Suspect held in killings of Canadians

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexican authorities have detained a suspect in the killing of a Canadian couple during an apparent robbery at their lakeside home in a popular retirement spot in western Mexico. Jalisco state prosecutors say they have detained Julio Castillo, a 31-year-old bricklayer who authorities say broke into the couple's home in Chapala on Sunday along with his brother. Prosecutors said in a statement Thursday that Castillo's brother remains at large. Authorities say Castillo told investigators he had been working at a home next door. □

Brazil asked to give Snowden asylum

BRASILIA, Brazil (AP) — Activists have given Brazil's Foreign Ministry a petition signed by 1.1 million people demanding that the South American nation grant asylum to National Security Agency leaker Edward Snowden. The signatures were delivered Thursday by a group of about 30, some wearing masks depicting Snowden, Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff and U.S. President Barack Obama. The demonstration was organized by the global civic organization Avaaz, which uses the Internet to mobilize support for political issues. □

Group wants activist's death probed

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — An international advocacy group is calling for an investigation into the mysterious slaying of a Haitian activist and his wife. Amnesty International said this week that Haitian human rights groups fear the killing could have been political because of the violent nature of the slaying and the senior position of the activist. Police say Daniel Dorival and Gildy Lareche were killed Saturday by a lone gunman as they walked through a residential neighborhood in the capital, Port-au-Prince. Police didn't give a motive for the killing. □

LOCAL Aruba TODAY

Celebrating 275 Years of Dedicated Service at The Radisson!

PALM BEACH – The Radisson Aruba Resort Casino & Spa hosted an elegant evening just recently in the Grand Caribbean Ballroom, in celebration of the resort's eleven colleagues, who have each concluded 25 years of dedicated, uninterrupted service.

The evening's program included an Anniversary Celebration, as well as an award-presentation to the Colleague, Supervisor and Manager of the Year, in appreciation of 2013 top performers.

Attended by the resort's managers and department heads who mingled and welcomed their colleagues, the evening was a much-enjoyed success.

In the words of Glenn Farro, Director of Human Resources: It feels like one big happy family at the Radisson, he said, where eleven colleagues have worked for a quarter of a



century. On behalf of the entire team we would like to thank each one of you celebrating silver anniversaries, and especially your family members, for lending you to us 8 hours a day, or

longer, that's about 62,400 hours per person, and you definitely deserve recognition for your excellent long-term career choices, acknowledged with gratitude and joy.



The evening served to acknowledge the hard-working anniversary celebrants, and their unchanging spirit of hospitality which prevails at the resort, as the soul of the Grande Dame of Palm Beach remains evergreen, offering genuine Aruban warmth so treasured by resort guests. The celebrating colleagues

included: Emiterio Navas, Indra Busby, Ligia Lacle, Lucio Croes, Ligia Panneflek, Cecilia Ras, Mathilde Clement, Liliana Tromp, Jacintho Christiaans, Norma Lacle and Orland Werleman pictured here with General Manager Mark Lyttleton Frances, as they are showered with gifts and tokens of appreciation. □

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have endless reasons to feel happy. Blue Residences is located within walking distance to Eagle Beach, one of the top 25 beaches of the world according to the 2013 Travelers Choice Beaches Award, according to millions of TripAdvisor travelers.

The project encompasses 124 whole-ownership units in three eight-story towers, all with 180° view of the Caribbean and just a few steps from the beach. On site amenities will include pools, snack-bar, mini market, landscaped sun-deck, fitness center, and full service spa and concierge service.

All owners receive a complementary membership in Preferred Residences, an optional luxury resort exchange program that offers owners "high-touch" exchange services and lifestyle benefits tailored especially for sophisticated affluent travelers.

Blue Residences has a privileged location across the street from the beach and next to The Bubali Bird Sanctuary, one of the biggest reservoirs on the island, and is also within walking distance to Palm Beach, home of the high-rise luxury hotels with a variety of water sports concessions, casinos, restaurants, bars and shops. This location is unequalled on the island!

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Mazda's Charitable Giving in Action

NOORD - In 2013 Mazda reaffirmed its commitment to giving back to the community by launching the Drive for Good holiday event, which generated money for charity with each new vehicle sold.

As a part of that effort, for each new vehicle sold between November 25, 2013 and January 2, 2014, \$1.00 per vehicle was donated to the Casu Cuna Orphanage in Aruba.

Through the outstanding efforts of the car dealers, this resulted in \$30,000 for the orphanage.

To discover Casa Cuna's most critical needs, Mazda representatives, accompanied by ECO, its local destination management company, visited the orphanage and met with its director, Quilin Arends-Maduro.

Based on that meeting, it was determined that the bathroom/shower area would be remodeled and the exterior of the buildings painted. Now completed, these improvements have had an amazing impact on the daily lives of both the resident children and dedicated faculty members.

Grateful Arends-Maduro reports the universe has answered her prayers, as she tried to renovate the bathrooms and showers on her own and discovered to her dismay that the project was beyond the children's home means.

Then a representative of ECO Destination Managements arrived at her door with the representatives of Mazda, delivering a true miracle.

Pictured here Mazda's Charitable Giving in Action with Quilin Arends-Maduro. CASA CUNA CHILDREN'S HOME: Casa Cuna Progreso Orphanage believes that every child has the right to have security, love, attention and structure. Each child must be able to experience that he or she belongs somewhere, in other words, having a home and a family life. The home focuses on children between 0-6 years which is the most influential

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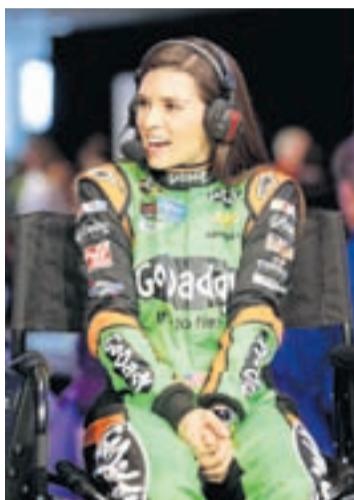
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Aruba TODAY

NASCAR's Patrick reacts to Petty's criticism



Driver Danica Patrick laughs at a question during an interview at NASCAR auto racing media day at Daytona International Speedway in Daytona Beach, Fla., Thursday, Feb. 13, 2014.

Associated Press

DAN GELSTON
AP Sports Writer

DAYTONA BEACH, Florida (AP) — NASCAR driver Danica Patrick has brushed off Hall of Famer Richard Petty's criticism.

Speaking at Daytona 500 media day on Thursday, Patrick refused to fire back at Petty, a seven-time champion, politely diffusing any blossoming controversy by simply stating he was entitled to his opinion. Patrick handled the comments much in the same way she dismissed Kyle Petty's remarks last year that "she's not a race car driver."

Continued on Page 22



Men's ski slopestyle gold medal winner Joss Christensen of the United States, left, celebrates with his teammates Gus Kenworthy, right, silver, and Nicholas Goepper, bronze, center, at the end of Christensen's last run, at the Rosa Khutor Extreme Park, at the 2014 Winter Olympics, Thursday, Feb. 13, 2014, in Krasnaya Polyana, Russia.

Associated Press
See Olympics Roundup on Page 20

NBA All-Star weekend has something for all

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — The NBA's All-Star weekend is a working trip for Damian Lillard, who is set to become the busiest All-Star ever. For Carmelo Anthony, it's a chance to get away from work.

The league's midseason

event has something for everyone, along with the belief that its All-Star weekend is second to none in sports. It starts on Friday with the announcement of the finalists and electees to the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame, and

finishes up with the game on Sunday at the recently renamed Smoothie King Center. "The NBA, we have the best All-Star, No. 1 because it obviously lasts the entire weekend. We do a great job of celebrating our legends, I think we do

that better than anybody else," Hall of Famer and TV analyst Charles Barkley said. "It's the greatest thing the NBA does well." The last All-Star weekend in New Orleans, in 2008, was a particularly good one, with Dwight Howard donning

Yankees, Marlins to play in Panama on March 15-16



In this Nov. 4, 2009, file photo, New York Yankees' Derek Jeter, left, and Mariano Rivera look at the championship trophy after winning the Major League Baseball World Series against the Philadelphia Phillies, in New York.

Associated Press

TAMPA, Florida (AP) — The Yankees will play exhibition games against the Miami Marlins in Panama City on March 15-16 to honor retired New York reliever Mariano Rivera, the first visit by Major League Baseball to the Central American nation since 1947.

Under the long-discussed deal announced on Thursday, career saves leader Rivera will promote the event, and a gala dinner will be held on March 14 to benefit the Mariano Rivera Foundation. Proceeds from the dinner will go to Children's Hospital in Panama City. Some Yankees trained in Panama in 1946 and faced an all-star team from that nation's professional league. The Yankees played the Brooklyn Dodgers there in several games during 1947 as part of a trip that also saw the teams go to Cuba, Puerto Rico and Venezuela. □

Continued on Page 21



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Top seed Li ousted in Qatar Open 3rd round

SANDRA HARWITT

Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — Australian Open champion Li Na was upset by Czech qualifier Petra Cetkovska 7-6 (2), 2-6, 6-4 in the Qatar Open third round on Thursday.

"She played well. I don't think I was playing so bad," Li said. "Maybe, sometimes the wrong choice made me lose a lot of important points."

It was the top-seeded Li's first loss of the year having won her two previous tournaments: Shenzhen and the Australian Open.

Regardless of her early defeat in Doha, Li will move up to a career-best No. 2 in the WTA rankings on Monday, overtaking Victoria Azarenka, who was not defending her Doha title because of a foot injury.

Second-seeded Agnieszka Radwanska of Poland was leading 6-4, 0-1 when her opponent, qualifier Mirjana Lucic-Baroni of Croatia, retired with a lower back injury.

Third-seeded Petra Kvitova was stretched to three sets before closing the door 7-6 (2), 5-7, 6-2 on fellow Czech Lucie Safarova.

The left-handed Kvitova served 15 aces and took advantage of four of five break-point opportunities in the two-hour, 25-minute match.

"I served well, yes," said Kvitova, the 2011 Wimble-



Petra Cetkovska of the Czech Republic returns the ball to Na Li of China during the fourth day of the WTA Qatar Ladies Open in Doha, Qatar, Thursday, Feb. 13, 2014.

Associated Press

don champion. "I had one window when I did some double-faults, unfortunately. But with the aces I'm really glad."

In Friday's quarterfinals, Cetkovska plays Angelique Kerber, Radwanska takes on Yanina Wickmayer, Kvitova faces fifth-seeded Jelena Jankovic, and fourth-seeded Sara Errani faces seventh-seeded Simona Halep.

Li, playing her first tournament since winning the

Australian Open, had a 3-1 lead in the third set, but the 133rd-ranked Cetkovska refused to fold.

"It's an amazing victory," Cetkovska said. "It's a little bit difficult to describe exactly what I feel at the moment.

"Even though I was 3-1 down in the third set I could manage to make it and get through."

Despite breaking Cetkovska's serve on six of 12 opportunities, and surrender-

ing only three of her own service games in 11 break points faced, Li played tentative tennis throughout the two-hour, 46-minute match. "It was cold. It's windy," said Li, noting the inhospitable weather greeting tennis players in Doha this week.

"The court is a little slower. When I think I can hit a winner the opponent always gets the ball back, so I always have to be ready for the next shot."

This marks the eighth time

Cetkovska has beaten a top-10 player. It's only the second time she's beaten a top-three ranked player — she upset the then third-ranked Agnieszka Radwanska at the 2011 Rome tournament.

Errani defeated Monica Niculescu of Romania 2-6, 7-5, 6-1, Jankovic defeated wild card Alisa Kleybanova of Russia 6-1, 6-2, and Kerber sent Klara Zakopalova of Czech Republic packing 6-2, 6-3. □

Plushenko retires after injury at Sochi Olympics

DAVID PACE

Associated Press

SOCHI, Russia (AP) — From wild cheers to stunned silence, the Sochi Olympics said goodbye Thursday to one of figure skating's all-time greats.

Evgeni Plushenko, the first figure skater in the modern era to win medals in four Olympics, retired from competitive figure skating shortly after withdrawing from the men's competition for medical reasons. The Russian said he injured himself during practice on Wednesday, then fell on a triple axel during warmups Thursday.

When Plushenko limped out of the arena, the cheering stopped, eventually turning into mild applause.

Plushenko's announcement came hours after an Olympic worker was injured when he was hit by a bobsled near the finish line at the Sanki Sliding Center. He was taken by helicopter to a local hospital. Six medals were awarded on Day 7 of the Olympics: in slopestyle skiing, cross-country skiing, biathlon, speedskating, short track speedskating



Evgeni Plushenko of Russia skates on the ice prior to pulling out of the men's short program figure skating competition due to illness at the Iceberg Skating Palace during the 2014 Winter Olympics, Thursday, Feb. 13, 2014, in Sochi, Russia.

Associated Press

and luge. In the first final of the day, the U.S. freestyle skiers swept the podium in slopestyle, with Joss Christensen leading the way in his Olympic debut. Germany completed a sweep of the four luge events by winning the team relay; Justyna Kowalczyk of Poland, skiing with a fractured foot, won gold in the women's cross-country 10-kilometer classi-

cal race; and Li Jianrou of China won gold in 500-meter short track speedskating after all three of her opponents in the final fell.

FIGURE SKATING: The 31-year-old Plushenko is the only modern-era figure skater to win medals in four different Olympics. He helped Russia win the team gold over the weekend. He

also won figure skating gold in 2006 and silver in 2002 and 2010. Plushenko said he said it felt "like a knife in my back" when he fell on a triple axel during Thursday's warmups. "I think it's God saying, 'Evgeni, enough, enough with skating,'" said Plushenko. In the short program, Yuzuru Hanyu of Japan led with a score of 101.45. The competition concludes Friday with the short program.

SLOPESTYLE SKIING: For only the third time in Winter Games history, a U.S. team swept the podium. Christensen led the way with a dominating performance that featured four near-perfect runs over the rails and jumps at the Rosa Khutor Extreme Park. Gus Kenworthy and Nick Goepper captured the silver and bronze, as the U.S. skiers matched the country's previous sweeps in men's figure skating in 1956 and men's halfpipe snowboarding in 2002. "I am stoked to be up here with my friends," Christensen said. "America, we did it."

CROSS-COUNTRY: Kowalczyk led virtually all the way, finishing in 28 minutes, 17.8 seconds and beating silver medalist Charlotte Kalla of Sweden by 18.4 seconds. Therese Johaug of Norway took bronze, 28.3 seconds behind.

SHORT TRACK: Li's win in the 500 keeps the Olympic title with China. Injured teammate Wang Meng couldn't defend the title she has won at every Winter Games since 2002. Arianna Fontana of Italy took the silver and Park Seung-hi of South Korea earned the bronze. Elise Christie of Britain caused the first crash of the wild final and was disqualified.

SPEEDSKATING: In the women's 1000-meter race, Zhang Hong pulled off a stunning victory to give China its first gold ever in Olympic speedskating. Her time of 1 minute, 14.02 seconds, broke the track record and just missed the Olympic mark set by Chris Witty at the 2002 Games. Ireen Wust took the silver and Margo Boer the bronze, giving the Dutch a dozen speedskating medals.

BIATHLON: Martin Fourcade of France earned his second gold of the Sochi Games with a victory in the men's 20-kilometer individual race. Fourcade, who won the 12.5K pursuit on Monday, finished 12.2 seconds ahead of silver medalist Erik Lesser of Germany. Yevgeny Garanichev of Russia won the bronze.

LUGE: Germany scored a golden sweep of all four luge events by winning the inaugural team relay. Felix Loch, Natalie Geisenberger and the doubles team of Tobias Wendl and Tobias Arlt finished their runs in 2 minutes, 45.649 seconds, beating Russia for the title by 1.030 seconds. Latvia won the bronze.

ICE HOCKEY: The United States defeated Slovakia 7-1 and Russia topped Slovenia 5-2 in preliminary rounds of the men's ice hockey competition, setting the stage for the two powers to battle on Saturday. Also, Canada defeated Norway 3-1 and Finland beat Austria 8-4. In the women's tournament, Germany defeated Japan 4-0 and Russia beat Sweden 3-1. □

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All Star

Continued from page 18

Lillard has a chance to be the star of this weekend, since he'll be involved in everything. The Portland guard, last season's rookie of the year, will become the first player to compete in five events. A first-time All-Star selection, he'll also take part in the Rising Stars Challenge for rookies and

said in an interview with the Trail Blazers' website. Anthony will start for the East, a chance to pick up a victory in a season where his New York Knicks have had far too few. He was asked if it he would be able to enjoy himself with so much misery around him in New York.

"It's going to be tough to kind of get into everything that's going on, but once I get down there, see

the game in New Orleans, where he was rookie of the year in 2006 and played for the Hornets until he was traded to the Los Angeles Clippers in 2011. The starting point guard for the West was the MVP of last year's game in Houston. MEDIA MADNESS: Fans can again watch the interview sessions with the All-Stars during Friday's media day online at nba.com/offthecourt. The live stream



In this Dec. 21, 2013, file photo, Portland Trail Blazers guard Damian Lillard celebrates after scoring during the second half of an NBA basketball game against the New Orleans Pelicans in Portland, Ore.

second-year players, will defend his title in the Skills Challenge, and is entered in the dunk and 3-point contests.

"It's obviously something that nobody has done before and I was presented with the opportunity, and they're all events that I feel like I'm capable of competing in, so I figured, 'Why not make history?'" Lillard

friends, see family, kind of not think about this for a couple of days, maybe it'll change," he said.

Here are five things to watch during All-Star weekend:

DECORATED DUNKERS: With Lillard, Indiana's Paul George and Washington's John Wall in the field, the dunk contest includes three All-Stars for the first time since 1988, when Michael Jordan edged Dominique Wilkins in a famed showdown in Chicago that also included Clyde Drexler. Defending champion Terrence Ross of Toronto, rookie Ben McLemore of Sacramento and Harrison Barnes of Golden State round out the field.

PAUL PLAYS: Chris Paul recovered from his shoulder injury just in time to play in

allows fans to watch four East All-Stars and four from the West answer questions from reporters live.

SILVER SPEAKS: Adam Silver holds his first press conference as NBA commissioner on Saturday. He became the league's fifth commissioner on Feb. 1 after replacing David Stern, who isn't expected in New Orleans after he was in charge for every All-Star weekend since 1984.

STANDING BY: The home-town Pelicans got an All-Star when Anthony Davis was selected as an injury replacement for Kobe Bryant. With Miami's Dwyane Wade missing the final game before the break because of an injured left foot and his status unknown, another East player may end up finding his way to New Orleans. □

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James' 3-pointer lifts Heat past Warriors, 111-110

The Associated Press

OAKLAND, California (AP)

— LeBron James capped one of his best games of the season in dramatic fashion, making a step-back 3-pointer with less than a second remaining to carry the Miami Heat past the Golden State Warriors 111-110 on Wednesday night and into the All-Star break on a high note.

NBA Capsules

With teammate Dwyane Wade scratched from the lineup with a sore left foot, James shouldered the load for the two-time defending NBA champions. He finished with 36 points, 13 rebounds and nine assists, saving his best moment for last.

After fellow All-Star Stephen Curry hit a bank shot to start a three-point play that put the Warriors ahead by two, James let the clock tick down on the other end. He swished in a 27-footer with two-tenths of a second left over Andre Iguodala, then patted his chest and high-stepped on the sideline to leave the announced sellout crowd of 19,596 stunned and silent.

James shot 14 of 26 from the floor, including several dazzling dunks, and helped the Heat go ahead by 21 points in the third quarter. Chris Bosh added 19 points and five rebounds, and reserve Michael Beasley scored 16 points in a thrilling victory for the Heat, who played without Wade



Miami Heat's LeBron James (6) is fouled by Golden State Warriors' Andre Iguodala during the second half of an NBA basketball game Wednesday, Feb. 12, 2014, in Oakland, Calif.

Associated Press

for the second straight night.

Curry finished with 29 points and seven assists, and David Lee had 21 points and 11 rebounds for the Warriors, who rallied to take an 87-84 lead early in the fourth quarter before the teams traded baskets late.

CLIPPERS 122, TRAIL BLAZ-

ERS 117

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Blake Griffin scored 36 points, Chris Paul had 20 points and 12 assists, and Los Angeles beat Portland in a back and forth game that featured 40 lead changes. The Clippers, who set a franchise record for largest margin of victory in their

45-point thrashing of Philadelphia on Sunday, converted 16 Portland turnovers into 20 points.

Paul made 10 of 15 shots in his second game back after missing 18 with a separated right shoulder, and Jamal Crawford added 25 points for Los Angeles. The Clippers have won 14 of their last 19 since Jan. 4, when the Spurs handed them their worst loss of the season, 116-92 in San Antonio. LaMarcus Aldridge led Portland with 25 points and Damian Lillard had 21.

MAVERICKS 81, PACERS 73 INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Monta Ellis had 23 points and nine rebounds, and Dirk Nowitzki added 18 points to help Dallas hand Indiana its third home loss of the season.

The Mavericks (32-22), who have won six of seven, finished a three-game road trip heading into the NBA All-Star break. Dallas' five-game winning streak was snapped at Charlotte on Tuesday.

George Hill had 14 points, and Lance Stephenson and Danny Granger both scored 13 for the Pacers (40-12), who have lost two of three.

The Mavericks scored the first six points of the fourth quarter and took a 66-62 lead when Ellis made a free throw with 6:55 remaining.

ROCKETS 113, WIZARDS 112 HOUSTON (AP) — James Harden scored 35 points and his layup with 0.7 seconds remaining lifted Hous-

ton over Washington.

The victory sends the Rockets into the All-Star break with a season-best seven-game winning streak.

John Wall gave Washington the lead with a pair of free throws with 4 seconds left. Trevor Ariza fouled out when he pushed Harden to the ground on the ensuing inbounds pass. It was ruled a foul away from the play, giving Houston one free throw and possession. Harden, who was 16 for 16 at the line, made the free throw before grabbing a pass from Chandler Parsons and driving into the lane for the winning shot. The Wizards had a chance to win at the end, but Kevin Seraphin's shot clanged off the rim.

Ariza had a season-high 32 points with a career-high 10 3-pointers.

SPURS 104, CELTICS 92

BOSTON (AP) — Tim Duncan scored 23 of his 25 points in the second half, powering injury-depleted San Antonio to a win over Boston.

Marco Belinelli added 16 points, 11 rebounds and eight assists for the Spurs, who played without guards

Tony Parker and Manu Ginobili and forward Tiago Splitter — all sidelined with injuries.

Boris Diaw added 18 points and Duncan grabbed nine rebounds to lead the Spurs to their fifth win in seven games.

Rajon Rondo led Boston with 16 points and Kris Humphries and rookie Kelly Olynyk had 15 apiece. The Celtics fell to 4-18 against Western Conference teams.

In other NBA games it was Dallas 81, Indiana 73; Memphis 86, Orlando 81; Toronto 104, Atlanta 83; San Antonio 104; Boston 92; Cleveland 93, Detroit 89; Brooklyn 105, Charlotte 89; Sacramento 106, New York Final 101, OT; Houston 113 Washington 112; New Orleans 102, Milwaukee 98; Minnesota 117, Denver 90; Utah 105, Philadelphia 100; Miami 111; Golden State 110; and LA Clippers 122, Portland

117. □

NASCAR

Continued from Page 18

Richard Petty said last week she can win a race only "if everybody else stayed home," and she receives attention because she's a woman, but added that publicity was good for NASCAR.

Patrick said good things could come from Petty's comments.

"As I said the last time somebody said something that was not so positive for me, it spawns so many positive articles," she said.



In this Feb. 21, 2013 file photo, NASCAR Hall of Fame driver Richard Petty speaks during a news conference at Daytona International Speedway in Daytona Beach, Fla.

Associated Press

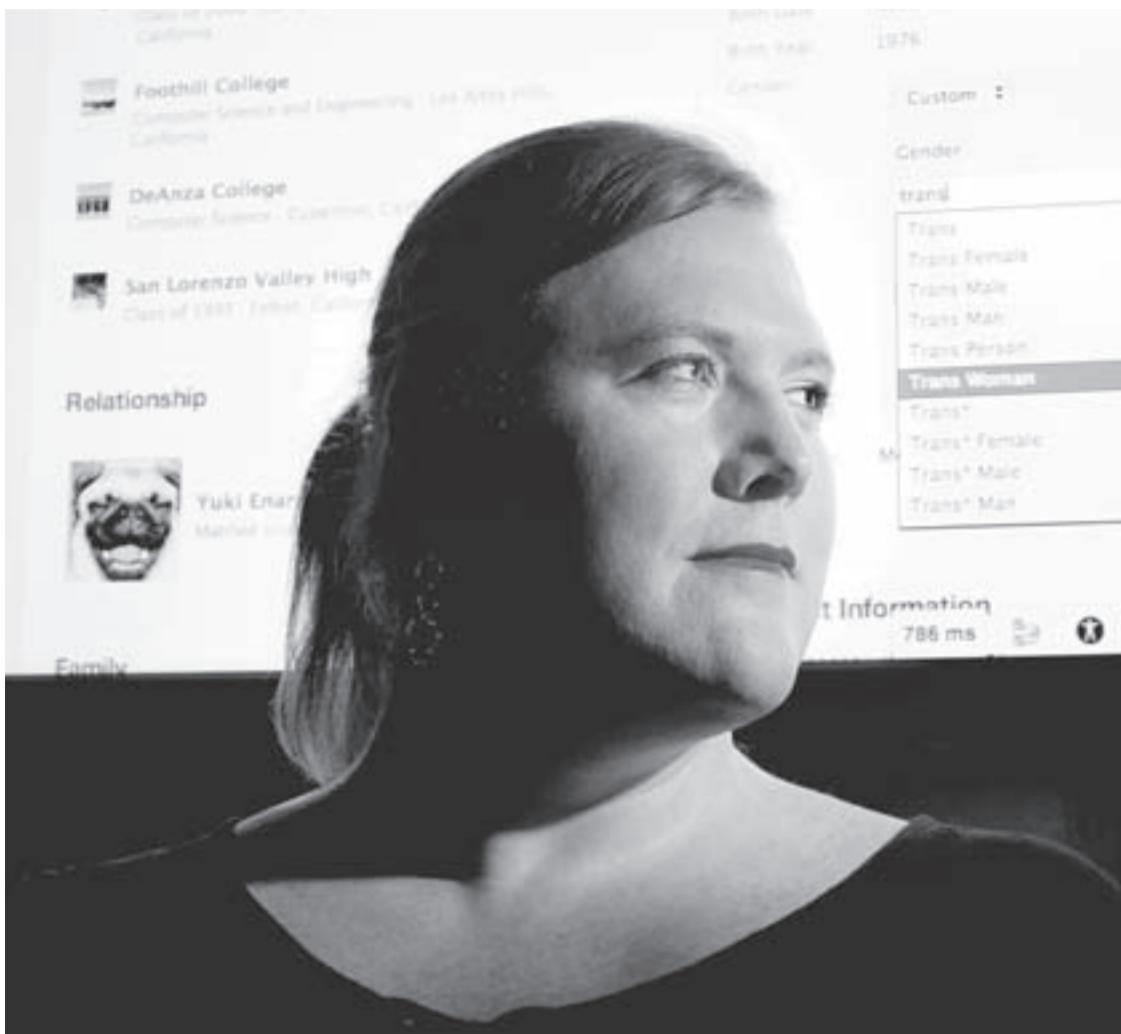
"I love the conversation that it creates in sport, and across the board it makes sports interesting. It makes life interesting when people have different perspectives, and that's fine with me.

"It has nothing to do with where it comes from.

The people that matter the most to me are my team, my sponsors and those little three-year-old kids that run up to you and want a great big hug and say they want to grow up to be like you.

That's the stuff I really focus on." □

New gender options for Facebook users



In this Wednesday, Feb. 12, 2014, Facebook software engineer Brielle Harrison demonstrates Facebook's expanded options for gender identification at her company's Menlo Park, Calif., headquarters.

Associated Press

MARTHA MENDOZA
AP National Writer

MENLO PARK, California

(AP) — You don't have to be just male or female on Facebook anymore. The social media giant is adding a customizable option with about 50 different terms people can use to identify their gender as well as three preferred pronoun choices: him, her or them. Facebook said the changes, shared with The Associated Press before the launch on Thursday, initially cover the company's 159 million monthly users in the U.S. and are aimed at giving people more choices in how they describe themselves, such as androgynous, bi-gender, intersex, gender fluid or transsexual. Facebook plans to take it global after working with activists abroad to come up with terms appropriate in other countries.

"There's going to be a lot of people for whom this is going to mean nothing, but for the few it does impact, it means the world," said Facebook software engineer Brielle Harrison, who worked on the project

and is undergoing gender transformation from male to female. She said she was changing her Facebook identity from Female to TransWoman.

"All too often transgender people like myself and other gender-nonconforming people are given this binary option, do you want to be male or female? What is your gender? And it's kind of disheartening because none of those let us tell others who we really are," she said. "This really changes that, and for the first time I get to go to the site and specify to all the people I know what my gender is." Facebook, which has 1.23 billion active monthly users around the world, also allows them to keep their gender identity private and will continue to do so. The Williams Institute, a think tank based at the University of California, Los Angeles, estimates that at least 700,000 individuals in the U.S. identify as transgender, an umbrella term that includes people who live as a gender different from the one assigned to them at birth.

The change to the gender selection option is seen as a major step toward acceptance for people who don't self-identify as male or female, but the high-profile development seemed senseless to those who believe in two genders, no more. "Of course Facebook is entitled to manage its wildly popular site as it sees fit, but here is the bottom line: It's impossible to deny the biological reality that humanity is divided into two halves: male and female," said Jeff Johnston, an issues analyst for Focus on the Family, an influential national religious organization. "Those petitioning for the change insist that there are an infinite number of genders, but just saying it doesn't make it so. That said, we have a great deal of compassion for those who reject their biological sex and believe they are the opposite sex." Masen Davis, executive director of the Transgender Law Center, said it may be hard for some people to understand the importance of having the ability to select from mul-

tiple genders online. But he said many transgender people will be thrilled with the change. "We applaud Facebook for making it possible for people to be their authentic selves online," he said.

In the past decade, the transgender movement has become much more organized and outspoken, demanding the kind of civil rights and respect already sought by gay activists. During this time, the transgender umbrella has been growing well beyond transsexuals to encompass a wide variety of gender identities.

The move by Facebook came after years of lobbying from users, some who started Facebook pages to petition for the change. Google+ offers male, fe-

male and "other" as choices, but transgender advocates said Facebook's many specific options puts the platform well ahead of any other online community. About 1 percent of Google+ users identify as other. At this point, Facebook targets advertising according to male or female genders. For those who change to something neutral, ads will be targeted based on the pronoun they select for themselves. Unlike getting engaged or married, changing gender is not registered as a "life event" on the site and won't post on timelines. Therefore, Facebook said advertisers cannot target ads to those who declare themselves transgender or recently changed their gender. □

Toyota recalls vehicles in U.S. for software glitch



Visitors inspect a car on display at Toyota gallery in Tokyo Tuesday, Feb. 4, 2014.

Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Toyota is recalling 294,000 vehicles in North and South America for a skid-control software glitch.

No accidents or injuries have been reported. Toyota Motor Corp. said Thursday the recall affects the RAV4 sport utility, Tacoma pickup and Lexus RX 350 luxury model, manufactured from March 2012 through December 2012.

Some 260,000 of the vehicles were sold in the U.S. The Japanese automaker said the problem can

cause stability control, anti-lock brakes and traction control to turn off, although standard braking will keep working.

The recall was announced Wednesday in North America along with a bigger global recall involving 1.9 million Prius hybrid vehicles, over a different software problem.

Toyota suffered massive recalls starting in 2009, affecting more than 14 million vehicles for problems including floor mats, gas pedals and brakes. □

Comcast to acquire Time Warner Cable for \$45.2B

DAVID GELLES

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Comcast, the nation's largest cable operator, wants to get even larger.

Already the dominant

deal for Time Warner Cable's boards, which will create a behemoth that will dominate the media industry. It is the second transformative deal for

and movie studio. And the deal, if completed, could affect consumers across the country, although it is unlikely to reduce competition in many markets.



This photo shows the Comcast logo on one of the company's vehicles, in Pittsburgh. Comcast has agreed to buy Time Warner Cable, in a deal that would combine the top two cable TV companies in the nation, according to a person familiar with the matter.

(AP Photo/Gene J. Puskar)

player in providing pay television services to U.S. consumers, Comcast announced on Thursday a

Comcast in recent years, coming just months after it completed an acquisition of NBC Universal, the TV

Describing the deal as "a friendly, stock-for-stock transaction," Comcast will acquire 100 percent of

Time Warner Cable's 284.9 million shares outstanding, in a deal worth about \$45.2 billion in stock value.

The deal will leave Time Warner Cable shareholders owning approximately 23 percent of Comcast's common stock.

"The financial benefits of this are attractive and will create sustainable benefits for years to come," Comcast's chief executive, Brian Roberts, said on a conference call Thursday.

Comcast is also expanding its share repurchase program to \$10 billion, a move that will somewhat offset the dilution from issuing so many new shares as part of the deal. Comcast and Time Warner Cable do not overlap in any markets, meaning that there are no consumers who will see their choices in cable operators diminished as a result of a deal. "We do not operate in any of the same ZIP codes," Roberts said. "We believe this transaction is approvable. It is pro-consumer, pro-competitive, and strongly in the public interest." □

Nestle: 2014 demand will remain weak

JOHN HEILPRIN

Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — Nestle, the world's biggest food and drinks maker, said Thursday it expects 2014 to be just as challenging as last year amid falling growth in emerging markets and weaker prices in Europe. The maker of Nescafe, Perrier, Jenny Craig and Haagen Dazs is a major buyer of food commodities such as wheat, sugar, and milk and its results are a good indicator of the strength of consumer demand around the world.

Nestle's shares fell 1.49 percent to close at 66.10 Swiss francs on the Zurich exchange Thursday.

Nestle, based in Vevey, Switzerland, said that after a weak 2013, it expects an improvement only in the second half of 2014. Organic sales, which do not reflect acquisitions and currency fluctuations, are expected to grow about 5 percent next year.

Its net profit in 2013 fell to 10 billion francs (\$11.1 billion), from 10.6 billion francs in 2012. In 2011, it made a profit of 9.5 billion Swiss francs.

"The macro-environment in 2013 was one of soft growth, minimal in the developed world and below recent levels in the emerging markets," CEO Paul Bulcke said. "Last year was challenging and 2014 will likely be the same."

He said this year would likely again see improvement "weighted to the second half." Nestle, like other food companies, is facing slowing demand in emerging markets and in Europe, where many customers are adjusting to government austerity measures.

In 2013, Nestle's overall sales grew by 2.7 percent to 92.2 billion francs, kept back by the impact of shifting foreign exchange rates. It said organic sales growth was 4.6 percent.

Nestle's aim every year for 5-6 percent organic growth and improvements in its trading operating profit margin, underlying earnings per share and capital efficiency. □

Stocks rise as investors assess earnings

STEVE ROTHWELL

AP Markets Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The stock market rose for the fifth time in six days Thursday as higher earnings from several big U.S. companies helped investors shrug off discouraging news about jobs and retail spending.

Goodyear Tire & Rubber surged to its highest level in almost six years after the company's earnings beat analysts' forecasts. CBS also jumped after the broadcaster beat Wall Street's profit expectations and speed up its stock buyback program.

Investors' focus has returned to company earnings after concerns about growth in emerging markets and the health of the U.S. economy pushed the Standard & Poor's 500 index to its lowest level in more than three months at the start of February. Analysts at S&P Capital IQ expect that earnings at

companies in the index increased last quarter at the fastest pace in a year.

"The momentum from earnings continues," said Andres Garcia-Amaya, a

points, or 0.4 percent, to 16,027.59. The Nasdaq composite rose 39.38 points, or 0.9 percent, to 4,240.67.

Stocks also got a lift from



Traders monitor stock prices at the New York Stock Exchange. The stock market rose for the fifth time in six days Thursday as higher earnings from several big U.S. companies helped investors shrug off discouraging news about jobs and retail spending.

(AP Photo/Mark Lennihan)

global market strategist at JPMorgan Funds.

The Standard & Poor's 500 index rose 10.47 points, or 0.6 percent, to 1,829.83. The Dow Jones industrial average climbed 63.65

deal news.

Time Warner Cable surged \$9.50, or 7 percent, to \$144.81 after the company agreed to be acquired by rival Comcast for \$45.2 billion in stock. The deal

Strong North American 4Q leads Goodyear earnings

THOMAS J. SHEERAN

Associated Press

CLEVELAND (AP) — Strong fourth-quarter results in Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.'s core North American market helped the tire maker beat Wall Street estimates Thursday.

With car sales increasing, the number of tires sold to auto makers in North America rose 7 percent in the fourth quarter over the same period in 2012. Replacement tire shipments

increased 1 percent. The number of tires sold worldwide increased 2 percent to 40.7 million. Goodyear shares almost 7 percent in morning trading. With a new labor agreement, Goodyear said it has halted production at an Amiens, France, factory with a contentious past and will close it by March. Last month protesting workers reached an agreement to end years of standoff, with Goodyear providing improved indemnities for

employees who are let go. Workers seized the plant's director and human resources chief for two days in early January to demand bigger severance packages.

The managers were released after police intervened.

The Akron-based company said it earned \$228 million, or 84 cents per share, on sales of \$4.8 billion. After one-time charges, Goodyear earned 74 cents, beating the Wall Street es-

timate of 65 cents.

Revenue missed the estimate of \$4.98 billion and was off 5 percent from the fourth quarter of 2012, hurt by lower third-party chemical sales in North America and foreign currency issues. The company had broken even on sales of \$5 billion in the last quarter of 2012. In the most recent quarter, Goodyear's North American segment operating income rose 72 percent to \$199 million.

For the full year, Goodyear

earned \$600 million, or \$2.28 per share, on sales of \$19.5 billion, up from 2012 earnings of \$183 million, or 74 cents per share, on sales of \$20.9 billion.

Goodyear also announced it fully funded its hourly pension fund with a \$1.15 billion cash payment, ending more than a decade of dealing with the issue. Its shares rose \$1.61, or 6.7 percent, to \$25.78 in morning trading. Its shares have risen more than 80 percent so far this year. □

Burger King's profit climbs on strength overseas

NEW YORK (AP) — Burger

King reported a higher quarterly profit on growth overseas and the popularity of new menu items like lower-calorie Satisfries french fries and the Big King burger that mimics McDonald's Big Mac.

Burger King and other fast-food chains have been facing diners constrained by the economy and a storm-filled winter, along with tough competition from higher-priced quick-service restaurants like Chipotle. In response, Burger King has introduced new menu items and pushed deals.

The Miami-based chain says global sales rose 1.7 percent at locations open at least a year, with particularly strong results in Asia. In North America the figure

edged up 0.2 percent.

By comparison, McDonald's said the figure declined 1.2 percent in the U.S., while Wendy's reported a 3.1 percent increase. Burger King Worldwide Inc. introduced Satisfries with great fanfare in September.

They have about 20 percent fewer calories than the chain's regular fries as a result of a batter that blocks out some of the oil during frying.

They cost extra, with a small order priced at \$1.89, or 30 cents more than the \$1.59 for the regular fries.

Alex Macedo, the chain's president of North American operations, said the Satisfries introduction has helped overall fry orders rise.

"It's not a mainstream

product, it doesn't have the broadest appeal, but it is a premium product and has had success," Macedo said. "People who were coming in and not ordering fries are now ordering fries."

Macedo added the fries also show Burger King's commitment to developing new products. Satisfries are just one the new menu creations from Burger King since the chain was pur-

chased and taken private by 3G Capital, a Brazilian private investment firm. In 2012, 3G unveiled a revamped menu before announcing a deal to take the chain public again. □



A car stops at the drive-thru at a Burger King restaurant near downtown Los Angeles. Burger King reported strong quarterly earnings on Thursday, Feb. 13, 2014.

(AP Photo/Nick Ut)

PepsiCo sticks by beverages despite struggles

CANDICE CHOI
MICHELLE CHAPMAN

AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — PepsiCo plans to hang onto its struggling North American drinks unit, with hopes that the introduction of naturally sweetened, lower-calorie sodas will help revive sales. The company has been under pressure to spin off the business and focus on its stronger Frito-Lay snack unit, most notably by activist investor Nelson Peltz of Trian Fund Management. The calls for a split come as PepsiCo's drinks, which

include Mountain Dew, Tropicana and Aquafina, have lost ground to bigger rival Coca-Cola Co. in recent years. U.S. soda consumption in general has also been on the decline, with people worried about the calories in regular soda and the artificial sweeteners in diet sodas.

But PepsiCo said Thursday that it concluded after an "exhaustive" review involving "bankers and consultants" that its current combined snacks and drinks structure would maximize shareholder value.

"That decision has been made for a good period of time going forward," Chief Financial Officer Hugh Johnston said in a call with reporters.

The strength in snacks and weakness in drinks played out again in the company's fourth quarter, with Frito-Lay delivering volume growth of 3 percent in North America. Volume for carbonated soft drinks, by contrast, fell in the "mid-single digits" despite stepped-up marketing. Non-carbonated drinks, which include Gatorade and Aquafina,

increased in the "low-single digits."

Still, CEO Indra Nooyi stressed that PepsiCo's drinks and snacks are complementary to each other. She also downplayed the company's exposure to colas, noting that they make up less than 25 percent of North American beverages.

Nooyi also noted that PepsiCo plans to test new natural sweeteners in carbonated drinks this year that could help improve results. Dr Pepper Snapple Group Inc. announced

similar plans this week. Coca-Cola, which introduced a similar concept in Argentina last year, reports next week.

In the meantime, PepsiCo also announced another cost-cutting program that will save \$5 billion over the next five years from actions including factory closures and investments in automated manufacturing. The company says about 40 percent of the savings will come from work force cuts, although it did not specify how many jobs would be affected. □

Mutts



Conceptis Sudoku

2		9	4		3
3				5	
	1	8			
6	4			7	9
7	8			6	4
		5	9		
	2			6	
4		3	6		8

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Difficulty Level ★★★★

2/14

6 Chix



B.EPSTEIN Six Chix © 2014 King Features Syndicate, Inc. © 2014 Benita Epstein

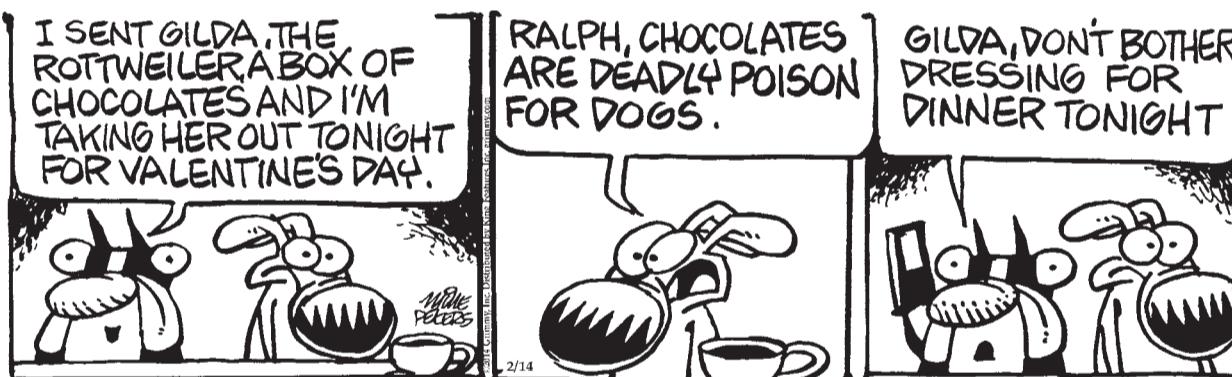
Blondie



Yesterday's puzzle answer

2	1	9	7	5	4	6	3	8
3	6	4	8	1	9	2	5	7
8	7	5	6	2	3	9	1	4
4	5	8	9	6	1	3	7	2
7	2	6	4	3	5	1	8	9
1	9	3	2	8	7	5	4	6
9	8	1	3	4	2	7	6	5
6	3	7	5	9	8	4	2	1
5	4	2	1	7	6	8	9	3

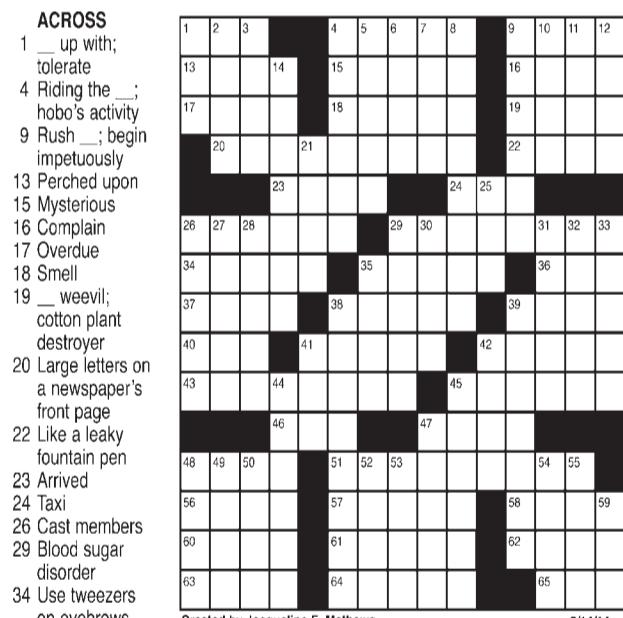
Mother Goose & Grimm



Baby Blues



Zits



Thursday's Puzzle Solved

K	N	E	W	O	P	E	R	I	R	O	
N	O	V	A	S	O	A	P	B	A	N	E
O	N	E	S	P	E	M	A	N	E	N	C
B	E	N	A	R	M	S	U	R	G	E	D
H	I	R	E	S		S	K	I			
S	C	A	N	T		B	L	E			
P	A	N	T	S		A	R	A			
U	N	D	O	D		D	E	N			
D	O	E	D	A		A	N	T			
E	W	R	E	D		P	I	N			

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2/14/14

- 2 Orem's state
3 Large handbag
4 Kingdoms
5 Eagle's nest
6 Press, as
clothes
7 Citrus fruit
8 Picture of the
ocean
9 Drink
10 Lunchtime
11 Discussion
12 Exclusively
Olympic medal
14 Bird with vivid
tail feathers
21 In the __;
uninformed
25 Stomach
muscles, briefly
26 Crop-killing bug
27 Piece of garlic
28 Melodies
29 Old; passé
30 Part of the eye
31 Fish with a net
32 Bird of prey
33 Sudden muscle
contraction
35 Gap; opening
- 38 Raggedy
39 GI
41 Expert
42 Sword's handle
44 Fleed and wed
45 Brand of bread
47 Waterbirds
48 Pierre's state:
abbr.
49 Prefix before
copier or pad
50 Not locked
52 Certain
53 Bench board
54 Chimpanzees
and gorillas
55 Queue
59 Calf's mother

Interest in Israel as Spain Weighs Citizenship for Sephardic Jews

ISABEL KERSHNER

RAPHAEL MINDER

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JERUSALEM - A Spanish initiative has set off a flurry of interest in Israel among Sephardic Jews who want to acquire Spanish citizenship.

Maya Weiss-Tamir, an Israeli lawyer who specializes in applications for citizenship in European countries, said she had received 700-800 email inquiries since last Friday, when the Spanish government approved a draft citizenship bill.

"It doesn't stop; the response has been crazy," Weiss-Tamir said in a telephone interview Wednesday.

Under the draft bill, Spain is offering citizenship to any person - whether Jewish or not - whose Sephardic origins can be certified. The bill removes some onerous existing requirements that include the need for applicants to renounce their current citizenship. It still requires final approval from the Spanish Parliament.

The legislation was first presented in November 2012 by Spain's foreign and justice ministers as a conciliatory gesture toward Sephardic Jews, whose ancestors were expelled in 1492 in one of the darkest chapters in Spanish history.

Fueling the excitement in Israel this week, the newspaper Yediot Aharonot published a list of more than 50 classic Sephardic surnames, like Abutbul, Me-

dina and Zuaretz.

Leon Amiras, chairman of an association for immigrants to Israel from Latin America, Spain and Portugal, said this week that he planned to apply for Spanish citizenship and that many families had books or documents allowing them to trace and prove their ancestry. When his own grandmother and great-grandmother left Izmir, in Turkey, for Argentina, they were issued an identity document that was certified by the Spanish consul there at the time.

Mordechai Ben-Abir, 88, Amiras' uncle, said he hoped to be the first to obtain Spanish citizenship if the law was passed.

Ben-Abir, who now lives in the southern Israeli city of Beersheba, began researching his family roots when he was in his 70s, went on to obtain a doctorate in philology at the University of Barcelona and has traced his Catalan ancestry back to the expulsion of 1492. To return to Spain 500 years later with a Spanish passport, he said, would be "a victory" for his family and the Jewish people.

The Justice Ministry of Spain said this week that it had no estimate of how many Sephardic Jews might be eligible for Spanish citizenship. So far, the ministry has registered 3,000 applications, but a spokeswoman said that number should now increase. □



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Science, not muscle, driving many Olympic wins

ANGELA CHARLTON

Associated Press

KRASNAYA POLYANA, Russia (AP) —

Nineteen-year-old Slovakian luger Josef Petrulak competed in the Sochi Olympics in a 22-year-old sled. That's right: His sled is three years older than he is. His German rivals get a new sled every year, designed by BMW and calibrated to whoosh faster, smoother and smarter every season. It's not hard to guess who won the doubles gold at the Winter Games this week. Much as we'd like to, no one today can pretend that the Olympics — or any sport, for that matter — is just about exceptional physical ability anymore. It's about the marriage between exceptional humans and exceptional technology, a union in which technology is increasingly the breadwinner.

Every advance in the ever-accelerating juggernaut of sports technology threatens to widen the divide between Olympic haves and have-nots. Well-



The doubles team of Tobias Arlt and Tobias Wendl of Germany speed down the track in their final run during the men's doubles luge at the 2014 Winter Olympics, Wednesday, Feb. 12, 2014, in Krasnaya Polyana, Russia.

sponsored teams and rich governments pay top-end scientists and engineers to shape their skis, perfect their skates, tighten their suits, measure their gravitational pull. That brings home medals, which in turn brings home new attention, new sponsors, new money to invest in the next race.

"Absolutely every little thing you can do counts, when a sport measures to the 1000th of a second," says American luger Matt

Mortensen.

"The suit, the shoes, the helmet, good position, aerodynamics, everything." The tech factor goes all the way down to the wax used by Olympic skiers — 500 different wax products to choose from, and special technicians to apply them. The U.S. luge team, less well-funded than more popular sports like snowboarding and without the government funding that some other countries' teams enjoy, had been falling behind in luge before Dow Chemical recently stepped in with money, expertise and a willingness to redesign some key elements of their sleds. And the U.S. bobsled and skeleton teams have reaped benefits of a relationship with BMW North America in recent years.

Ferrari infuses money and research to Italy's speedskating, skiing, bobsled and luge teams. Britain's skeleton team gets money and advice on aerodynamics from McLaren, better known for its Formula One racing prowess. Lockheed Martin helped design the U.S. speedskaters' suits. BMW has special wind tunnels for athletes' training. Don't press for too many details, though. Teams and companies keep them secret to maintain their edge. To keep things from getting too skewed toward corporate connections, sports federations and Olympic officials try to level the field.

—The International Olympic Committee takes poorer athletes under its wing

and supplies them with more cutting-edge training and equipment.

—The International Ski Federation banned parabolic skis that turn too sharply, to the indignation of U.S. skier Ted Ligety, world champion in super-combined and a leading contender in Fri-



Speedskater Shani Davis of the U.S. trains at the Adler Arena Skating Center during the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia, Thursday, Feb. 6, 2014.

Associated Press

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at these Olympics are allowing much closer, clearer and faster footage that athletes can later study to improve performance. Underequipped underdogs still have a chance; Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt started out as an IOC aid recipient. When they do overcome the odds and rivals' superior technology, those victories are more special than ever.

But no Olympic athlete today is technology-free. Even if they shun banned substances, the medical treatment they receive can border on bionic.

It's hard to find anyone who wants to turn the clock back to the days of wooden skis and pre-Zamboni ice rinks, despite a perception that the Olympics were more about pure sport back when athletes carried their own equipment.



A waxing technician works on a ski during the cross-country sprint competitions at the 2014 Winter Olympics, Tuesday, Feb. 11, 2014, in Krasnaya Polyana, Russia.

Associated Press

day's competition.

—A new ski jump monitoring system uses algorithms to take Mother Nature out of the equation, factoring in wind speed and direction for each jumper to create a fairer result. "So it's purely athletes' performance," said Walter Hofer, ski jumping competition director for the International Ski Federation.

—Watchmaker Omega makes sensors for bobsleds that measure speed every meter along the dizzyingly fast course, along with acceleration rate and gravitational force.

Sometimes technology works to everyone's advantage, or is meant to. Advances in camera abilities

ment into the opening ceremony of the first Winter Games 90 years ago.

"Look at my son. He's 4 and he knows how to use the iPad better than I do. He creates folders, things I don't understand. Technology is life today," said Russian fan Alexander Bykovsky. He and his family marveled at watching ski jumpers and lugers in person, even if his camera wasn't fast enough to catch their action.

Skier Ligety argues against efforts to hold athletes back. Banning parabolic skis "was a wrong decision as far as the progression of the sport, and as far as safety goes," he told reporters this week. □

TV comedy pioneer Sid Caesar dies at 91

LYNN ELBER

AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — To put it simply: Sid Caesar invented TV sketch comedy and gave it stature as a funhouse mirror of the everyday. Some compared him to Charlie Chaplin for his brilliance at blending humor with touches of pathos.

The genius of 1950s TV comedy is illuminating television even today. Shows from sketch comedy stalwart "Saturday Night Live" to sitcoms owe a debt to Caesar's brilliant interpretation of material by America's greatest comedy writers, among others.

The actor-comedian, who died at 91 on Wednesday at his Los Angeles area home after a brief illness, was remembered by actor-director Carl Reiner as a great flame who drew comedy writer "moths" including Mel Brooks and Neil Simon to his side.

He was "inarguably the greatest pantomimist, monologuist and single sketch comedian who ever worked in television," Reiner said.

"Your Show of Shows," 1950-54, with co-star Imogene Coca, and "Caesar's Hour," 1954-57, were his major achievements.

On "Your Show of Shows," Caesar staged 90 minutes of skits, revues, pantomime and satire that his audience found not only hilarious, but also vividly relatable. His comedy style, while often antic, was rooted in reality.

"He was one of the truly great comedians of my time and one of the finest privileges I've had in my entire career was that I was able to work for him," Woody Allen said in a statement.

While Caesar's sketch comedy lives on in shows like "SNL," his emphasis on humor born out of human nature is part of current sitcoms such as "Modern Family," said longtime friend Eddy Friedfeld. He and Caesar wrote the 2003

biography "Caesar's Hours: My Life in Comedy, With Love and Laughter."

Among Caesar's TV staff writers, Friedfeld noted, several went on to create memorable sitcoms, including Reiner's "Dick Van Dyke Show," based on his "Your Show of Shows" experiences, and Larry Gelbart's "M-A-S-H."

While Caesar was best known for his TV shows, which have been revived on DVD in recent years, he also had success on Broadway and occasional film appearances, notably in "It's a Mad Mad Mad Mad World."

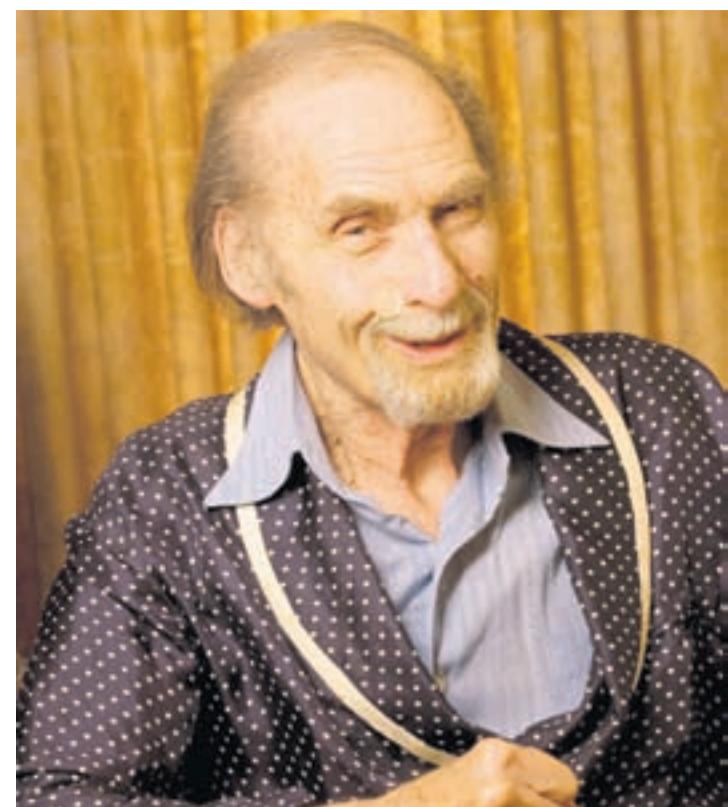
Caesar was born in 1922 just north of New York City in Yonkers, New York, the third son of an Austrian-born restaurant owner and his Russian-born wife. His first dream was to become a musician, and he played saxophone in bands in his teens.

His talent for comedy was discovered when he was serving in the Coast Guard during World War II and got a part in a Coast Guard musical, "Tars and Spars." He also appeared in the movie version. Wrote famed columnist Hedda Hopper: "I hear the picture's good, with Sid Caesar a four-way threat. He writes, sings, dances and makes with the comedy." That led to a few other film roles, nightclub engagements, and then his breakthrough hit, a 1948 Broadway revue called "Make Mine Manhattan."

Caesar was a brawny young man with a beetle brow, rubber face and distinctive mole on his left cheek whose first comedy-variety show, "The Admiral Broadway Revue," premiered in February 1949 and was off the air by June. Its fatal shortcoming: unimagined popularity. It was selling more Admiral television sets than the company could make. Admiral, its exclusive sponsor, pulled out. But the audience was primed for Caesar's subse-

quent efforts. "Your Show of Shows," which debuted in 1950, and "Caesar's Hour" three years later, drew as many as 60 million viewers weekly and earned its star \$1 million annually at a time when \$5, he recalled, "bought a steak dinner for two."

Increasing ratings competition from Lawrence Welk's variety show put "Caesar's Hour" off the air in 1957. When "Caesar's Hour" ended, its star was only 34. But the unforgiving cycle of weekly television had taken a toll: He had started relying on alcohol and pills for sleep every night so he could wake up and create more comedy. □



This Sept. 28, 2005 file photo shows actor Sid Caesar at his home in Beverly Hills, Calif. Caesar, whose sketches lit up 1950s television with zany humor, died Wednesday, Feb. 12, 2014. He was 91.

Associated Press

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Kevin Spacey dealing Season 2 of 'House of Cards'

FRAZIER MOORE

AP Television Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — "Did you think I'd forgotten you?" asks Francis Underwood, addressing us viewers near the end of the second-season "House of Cards" debut. Then he roguishly adds, "Perhaps you hoped I had."

As if!

Portrayed by series star Kevin Spacey, Underwood, the soon-to-be-sworn-in vice president, has a delicious way of conspiring with the audience in his Beltway depravity: a sly aside, a knowing roll of his eyes, a caustic pronouncement shared only with us.

Though many of the first-season batch of episodes are sparked with Underwood's in-our-face declarations, he keeps his own counsel until late in this second-season kickoff.

"There is but one rule," he reminds us in its final moments — "hunt or be hunted." Happily for us, another 12 new episodes keep Underwood on the hunt as Netflix releases the full second season on its website Friday.

Set in Washington in the current day, "House of Cards" is a loose reinvention of the



This image released by Netflix shows Kevin Spacey as Francis Underwood in a scene from "House of Cards." The second season of the popular original series premieres on Friday, Feb. 14, 2014 on Netflix.

Associated Press

1990s British political thriller of the same name.

It premiered a year ago and instantly established Netflix as a bold new contender in the world of original video, stealing thunder from such august cable networks as HBO and AMC while landing the first major Emmy nominations for a streaming-video series.

In short, this "Cards" game

was a game changer, forcing viewers (and the industry) to think outside the box: the box known as "TV."

Now Underwood, formerly a ranking U.S. Congressman, has plotted his way into the vice presidency. But there's no hint he's satisfied with that lofty perch, if the first four hours made available for preview are any indication. Even as he

faces growing threats that could lead to his downfall, he's driven to climb higher, whatever it takes.

"That's the interesting thing about Francis: He has no allegiance, not even to party," says Spacey with an admiring laugh.

Actually, Underwood does seem to have a precious pair of allegiances: to his own accumulation of pow-

er and to his wife, Claire, his loyal partner-in-crime, played by Robin Wright (who last month won a Golden Globe for her performance).

Last season, Underwood memorably stated that he loves his wife "more than a shark loves blood." As he navigates the political world, and taps into the underworld, his collusion with Claire is one of the series' most fascinating elements.

"I love the fact that the new season is coming out on Valentine's Day," says Spacey puckishly. "I think their relationship is incredibly romantic."

Interviewed last week, Spacey is natty in a blue pinstripe suit, open-collar shirt and swank olive green oxfords. At 54, he looks younger and more easygoing than Underwood, who, despite unflagging Southern charm and boundless energy, seems weathered by the pressures of his job and his insatiable ambition. "There is so much I don't know about Francis, so much that I'm learning," says Spacey, clearly pleased to be granted even more time to explore him: Netflix recently announced plans for a third season. □



This image provided by Netflix shows Yoda in a scene from an episode of the sixth season of "Star Wars: The Clone Wars."

Associated Press

MICHAEL LIEDTKE

AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Netflix's Internet video service is coming to the rescue of "Star Wars" fans left in limbo by the abrupt cancellation of "The Clone Wars," an animated television series that embellishes

the lore of the Jedi Order and Sith Lords.

The sixth and final season of "Star Wars: The Clone Wars" will be shown exclusively to Netflix subscribers in the U.S. and Canada beginning March 7 as part of a licensing deal announced Thursday.

Financial terms weren't disclosed.

The California company has already pledged to spend about \$3 billion this year on licensing video as it tries to expand its audience of 48 million worldwide subscribers.

A significant chunk of that money is being earmarked for video that can only be seen on Netflix. One of the company's most popular exclusives, the Emmy-award winning political drama "House of Cards," returns for its second season on Friday.

The resurrection of "The Clone Wars" will finish the story that was still unre-

solved when Time Warner Inc.'s Cartoon Network cancelled the series following the fifth season. Cartoon Network dropped the series after Time Warner rival Walt Disney Co. bought the "Star Wars" franchise as part of its 2012 acquisition of Lucasfilm.

Besides showing all 13 episodes of the sixth season, Netflix's video-streaming service gained the exclusive rights to the director's cut of previous seasons in "The Clone Wars."

Netflix Inc. has been cultivating closer ties with Disney while increasing its spending on licensing rights as part of its efforts to at-

Netflix to show final season of 'Clone Wars'

tract more subscribers to its \$8 monthly service, which delivers video to Internet-connected TVs and other devices. Disney previously struck an agreement with Netflix that allows the Internet video service to show the next wave of "Star Wars" movies shortly after they leave the theaters. That deal begins in 2016. Netflix is emerging as a popular alternative for TV series canceled by broadcast and cable networks. The company revived the critically acclaimed comedy "Arrested Development" last year and plans to bring back the mystery "The Killing." □

Israel's Big Question



THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN

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I've written a series of columns from Israel in the past two weeks because I believe that if Secretary of State John Kerry brings his peace mission to a head and presents the parties with a clear framework for an agreement, Israel and the Jewish people will face one of the most critical choices in their history. And when they do, all hell could break loose in Israel. It is important to understand why.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, not without reason, is asking the Palestinians to recognize Israel as the "nation state of the Jewish people," confirming that if Israel cedes them a state in the West Bank, there will be two-states-for-two-peoples. But, for Netanyahu to get an answer to that question, he will have to give an answer to a question Israelis have been wrestling with, and avoiding, ever since the 1967 war reconnected them with the heartland of ancient Israel, in the West Bank, known to Jews as Judea and Samaria. And that is: "What is the nation state of the Jewish people?"

Kerry, by steadily making the answer to that question unavoidable, has set the whole Israeli political system into a roiling debate, with some ministers shrilly attacking Kerry and slamming Netanyahu for even putting the question on the table - as if the status quo were sustainable and just hunky-dory.

For instance, Kerry recently observed at a conference in Munich that if the current peace talks failed "there's an increasing delegitimization campaign that's been building up (against Israel). People are very sensitive to it. There are talks of boycotts and other kinds of things."

Some Israeli ministers and American Jewish leaders blasted Kerry for what they said was his trying to use the BDS movement - "boycotts, divestment and sanctions" - as a club to pressure Israel into making more concessions. I strongly disagree. Kerry and President Barack Obama are trying to build Israelis a secure off-ramp from the highway they're hurtling down in the West Bank that only ends in some really bad places for Israel and the Jewish people. I like the way Gidi Grinstein, the founder of the Reut Institute, a nonprofit that works on the thorniest problems of Israeli society, puts it: "We are in a critical moment in our history - far more significant than many realize." Ever since 1936, "the Zionist movement has sought to establish a sovereign Jewish and democratic majority in Zion, and,

therefore, eventually accepted the principle of two-states-for-two-peoples: a Jewish state and an Arab state." Although there is a powerful settler movement in Israel that would like to absorb the West Bank today, the State of Israel has continued to tell the world and the Jewish people that, under the right security conditions, it would cede control of that occupied territory and its 2.5 million Palestinians and forge a two-state deal.

If Kerry's mission fails - because either Israelis or Palestinians or both balk - he will either be tacitly or explicitly declaring that this two-state solution is no longer a viable option and "that would plunge Israel into a totally different paradigm," said Grinstein, who recently authored the book "Flexibility: The Secret of Jewish Adaptability."

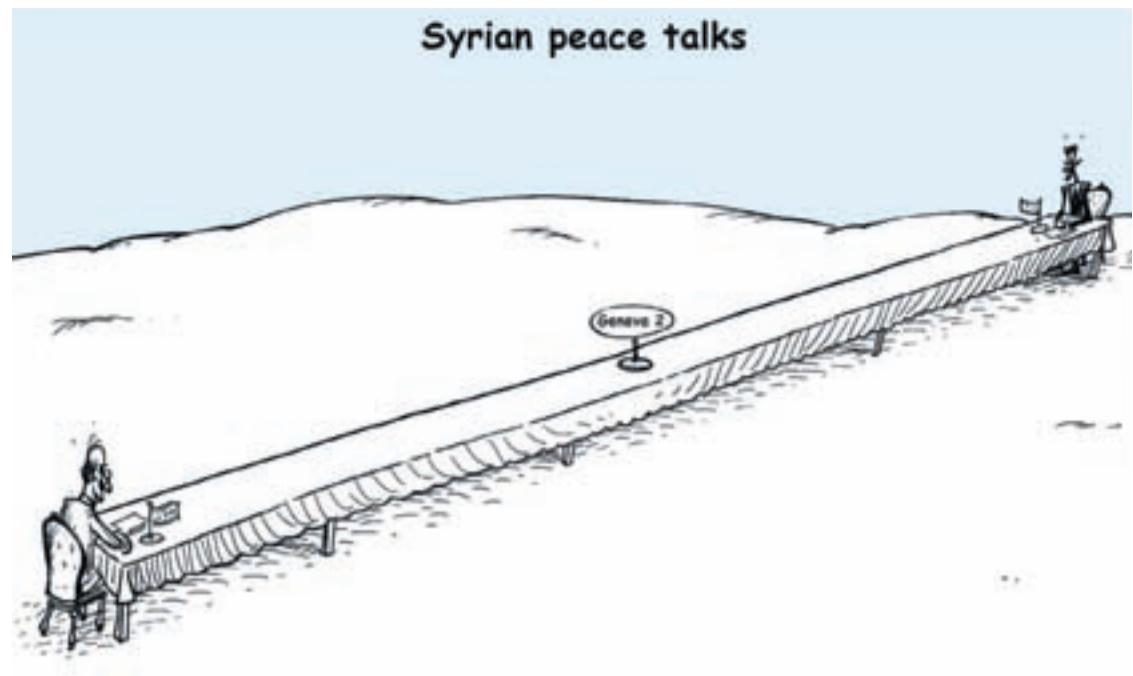
It would force Israel onto one of three bad paths: either a unilateral withdrawal from parts of the West Bank or annexation and granting the Palestinians there citizenship, making Israel a binational state. Or failing to do either, Israel by default could become some kind of apartheid-like state in permanent control over the 2.5 million Palestinians. There are no other options.

But what these three options have in common, noted Grinstein, is that they would lead to a "massive eruption of the BDS movement" and "the BDS movement at heart is not about Israel's policies but Israel's existence: they want to see Israel disappear. What is keeping the BDS movement contained is that we're still in the paradigm of the two-state solution." If that paradigm goes, he added, not only will the BDS movement launch with new momentum, but the line between it and those around the world who are truly just critical of Israel's West Bank occupation will get blurred.

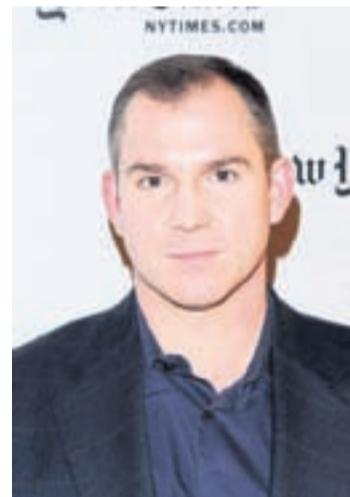
Furthermore, being the "nation state of the Jewish people," means that the values of Israel cannot be sharply divergent from the values of the Jewish diaspora (the vast majority of American Jews vote liberal) or from the values of America - Israel's only true ally. Added Grinstein: "If that happens, the relationship between Israel and America and American Jewry will inevitably become polarized."

To avoid that, no one expects Israel to concede to whatever Palestinians demand or to accept insecure borders or to give Palestinians a free pass on their excesses. And Kerry is not asking that. Israel should bargain hard and protect its interests. "But Israel has to be seen as credibly committed to ending its control over the Palestinians in the West Bank," concluded Grinstein, otherwise it won't just have a problem with BDS, but eventually with the United States and a growing segment of American Jews - "turning Israel from a force of unity for Jews to a force of disunity." So responding to the Kerry plan, when it comes, is about something very deep: What is the nation state of the Jewish people - and how will Jews abroad and Israel's closest ally, the United States, relate to it in the future? □

Syrian peace talks



Panic In The Locker Room!



FRANK BRUNI

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A news flash for every straight man out there: You've been naked in front of a gay man.

In fact you've been naked, over the course of your life, in front of many gay men, at least if you have more than a few years on you. And here you are - uninjured, uncorrupted, intact. The Earth still spins. The sun rises and sets.

Maybe it was in gym class, long ago. Maybe at the health club more recently. Or maybe when you played sports at the high school level, the college level, later on. Whether we gay guys are 1 in 10 or 1 in 25, it's a matter of chance: At some point, one of us was within eyeshot when you stripped down.

And you know what? He probably wasn't checking you out. He certainly wasn't beaming special gay-conversion gamma rays at you.

That's why you weren't aware of his presence and didn't immediately go out and buy a more expensive moisturizer and a disc of Judy Garland's greatest hits. His purpose mirrored yours. He was changing clothes and showering. It's a locker room, for heaven's sake. Not last call at the Rawhide.

On Sunday evening, in a story in

The Times by John Branch and on ESPN, a college football star named Michael Sam came out. Because Sam is almost certain to be drafted, he could soon be the first openly gay active player in the National Football League - in any of the four major professional sports in the U.S.

Most reactions from the sports world were hugely positive, even inspirational.

Some were not.

"It'd chemically imbalance an NFL locker room," an NFL personnel assistant, speaking anonymously, said to Sports Illustrated. I think steroids, Adderall and painkillers have already done a pretty thorough job of that, and on the evidence of his comment, they've addled minds in the process.

Sports Illustrated quoted an unnamed assistant coach who also brought up the fabled sanctum of Tinactin and testosterone. "There's nothing more sensitive than the heartbeat of the locker room," he said. "If you knowingly bring someone in there with that sexual orientation, how are the other guys going to deal with it?" To his question, a few of my own: When did the locker room become such a delicate ecosystem? Is it inhabited by athletes or orchids?

And how is it that gladiators who don't flinch when a 300-pound mountain of flesh in shoulder pads comes roaring toward them start to quiver at the thought of a homosexual under a nearby nozzle? They may be physical giants, but at least a few of them are psychological pipsqueaks.

And they're surprisingly blunt and paleolithic. When NFL Network's Andrea Kremer recently brought up the possibility of an openly gay player with Jonathan Vilma, a New Orleans Saints linebacker, he said: "Imagine if he's the guy next to me and, you know, I get dressed, naked, taking a shower, the whole nine, and it just so happens he looks at me."

"How am I supposed to respond?" Vilma added.

Well, a squeal would be unmanly, Mace might not be enough and NFL players tend to use their firearms away from the stadium, so I'd advise him to do what countless females of our species have done with leering males through history. Step away. Move on. Dare I say woman up?

Or Vilma could use a line suggested by sports journalist Cyd Zeigler on the website Outsports.com: "I'm so telling your boyfriend you stole a peek."

The anxiety about the locker room makes no sense in terms of the kind of chaotic setting it often is, with all sorts of people rushing through, including reporters of both sexes. It's a workplace, really, and more bedlam than boudoir.

The anxiety depends on stereotypes of gay men as creatures of preternatural libido. (Thanks, but I lunge faster for pasta than for porn.)

And it's illogical. "Every player knows that they are playing or have played with gay guys," John Amaechi, a former pro basketball player who came out after his retirement, told me. It's just that those gay guys didn't or haven't identified themselves. Why would doing so make them a greater threat? Wouldn't an openly gay athlete have a special investment in proving that there's zero to worry about?

Michael Sam proved as much at the University of Missouri, where teammates learned of his sexual orientation before their most recent season. They finished 12-2, and are publicly praising him so far.

Nothing about trembling or cowering in the showers.

The person who raises that fear, Amaechi said, "is a bigot finally falling over the cliff and grasping for any straw that might keep their purchase."

When every rational argument is gone, you go with that. □

Snowy Curtain Falls To Close New York Fashion Week



NEW YORK (AP) — Fashionistas climbed over snow banks and girded themselves with their purses against brutal wind and sleet as a winter storm blanketed New York City on Thursday, the final day of Fashion Week. But neither wind nor sleet nor snow stopped most fashion fans from their appointed rounds — i.e., the high-profile shows that traditionally close out the week. Outside the Ralph Lauren show in Greenwich Village, a few women could even be seen in stiletto heels navigating the snowy entrance. Most, though, sacrificed fashionable feet for practical waterproof boots. Employees shoveled walkways around the tents at Lincoln Center, and the tents' main sponsor, Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week, said in an email that "we plan to move forward with all shows as scheduled." Lauren, Calvin Klein and Marc Jacobs were the day's big draws. Stephanie Comfort of Lakeville, Conn., drove into

New York City for Lauren's show. "It was worth every effort," she said afterward. The trip in, which usually takes her 90 minutes, took 2½ hours. She didn't care. "We'll remember this forever," she said. She was planning to have lunch and do some shopping, and then drive back out to Connecticut. Ashley Kozel, from Sarasota, Fla., had flown up in her private plane, just to attend the Lauren show. She wore purple suede high-heeled pumps by Christian Louboutin and a purple suede dress with a cropped leopard print jacket, both by Lauren of course. "It's fashion over function," said Kozel, who had actually hitched a ride on her boyfriend's back for a few yards to avoid stepping in the ice and snow. Sitting in the front row at the show was Terry Lundgren, CEO and chairman of Macy's Inc., who was wearing a pinstriped gray suit. He was unfazed by the weather. "Fortunately, I have a four-wheel drive. We took our

time," he said. As for business, Lundgren said Macy's has been selling a lot of coats. He said Wednesday was strong but Thursday could break records. At the Lincoln Center tents, Daiki Nagai, 20, of Tokyo, stood shivering under an awning where he had taken refuge. The university student and two of his friends had the plaza, usually crowded with fashionistas and industry folk during the shows, pretty much to themselves as clumps of wet snow swirled around them. "I'm waiting for models," said the math major. "But I haven't seen any." While some might disagree, the man behind the J. Mendel label says he loves to see women all bundled up. "There's nothing more beautiful than a woman covering herself with layers of clothes," said Gilles Mendel, J. Mendel's designer and CEO, whose Russian-French family began the company as furriers in the 19th century. "This is my kind of weather,"



The Ralph Lauren Fall 2014 collection is modeled during Fashion Week in New York on Thursday, Feb. 13, 2014.

(AP Photo/Richard Drew)

added Mendel, a smartly dressed bespectacled man with a thick French accent. "Snow is beautiful. New York has never been so more beautiful all covered with snow. New Yorkers are resilient. They're gonna be here and come and look at my beautiful show. Furs galore."

Hanging on a backstage rack, waiting for a model, was a wool and leather plaid jacket with a fox fur collar. Meanwhile, in the front row, one of the guests watched the show wearing gloves, a scarf and ski goggles perched atop her head. □